

# **A History of Northern Essex Community College**

**1960-1985**

**by John Spurk**

**Edited with an introduction by Robert Eddy**

**Epilogue by Mary Wilson, in collaboration**

**with Wendy Shaffer**

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**Northern Essex  
Community College**

**Northern Essex Community College**

**Haverhill, Massachusetts**



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# Preface

by Robert Eddy

Tragically, Professor John Spurk died of cancer on December 7, 1991, before the publication of his history of Northern Essex Community College, which he had completed in June 1989. His text was a large 337 pages with 62 appendixes. As a former student of John Spurk, a graduate of NECC and as a then assistant professor at Boston University, I met with NECC President John Dimitry shortly after John Spurk's death to help the college make this historical book a more manageable size. In a contract letter signed in March, 1992 President Dimitry made the task clear: "What we are seeking is a major editing rather than a rewriting of John's work which we believe is currently too long to be readable and too lengthy in terms of what we can afford to print. The content itself is not at issue." My job as editor was to shorten the text to approximately half the size that Dr. Spurk left it. I did not "rewrite" the book, other than adding about a half dozen transitional sentences necessitated by longer than usual excisions of Professor Spurk's text. The reader can be assured that these are John Spurk's words; this is his book. Before the end of 1992, I delivered a book of 150 odd pages to my alma mater and to NECC's President. Because of the complexities of college funding and the endless multi-tasking of a dynamic community college serving its many students and community groups, this shortened version of the history NECC's first twenty-five years is being printed by the college in 2017. I have made adjustments in my portion of the text to acknowledge the actual year of publication.

One of the issues I dealt with as I edited the manuscript, especially the final chapters, was that since Dr. Spurk was writing in the present and expected the book to be published quickly, he refers to matters that were current a generation ago. People were named as holding a position "now," or possibilities and trends were mentioned that have since become realities or evaporated. As much as possible I have tried to leave the text unchanged. But when he names a person as in a position "now" I add the phrase "in 1990."

Wendy Shaffer and Mary Wilson provide a brief overview of important events and developments at NECC since 1985. This update, not being based on the kind of elaborate research which Professor Spurk engaged in, is meant merely to suggest the developments which the future historian of the College for the period 1985-2010 must analyze in depth, and with the benefit of the passing of time.

It is important for the reader to understand that Dr. Spurk, as the College's first historian, performed an additional crucial function beyond the writing of this book: he gathered and began the organizing of the College Archives. Dr. Spurk's history in its unedited form, will be bound and then added to the Archives. Readers interested in seeing what I left out and how I edited the text will find all the materials necessary for such a project in the Archives Room in Bentley Library. Moreover, the 62 appendixes that he originally intended to include in the history, will be bound and added to the Archives Room. They provide the major documents he used in researching and writing this history.

# Introduction

by Robert Eddy

I had the privilege to be John Spurk's student and his friend. He personifies the first quarter century of NECC's mission to educate and to inspire. He inspired me profoundly, as he did countless other students. In a real sense all his students were friends and equals, for he believed in democracy and intended above all, to help produce truly democratic and critical thinkers.

Unlike too many teachers, John Spurk did not preserve himself. He entered deeply into lives, not like Big Brother to control, not like an analyst to effect cures, not like a voyeur to gape, but like a deeply involved coach trying to get the most out of his team players. He was also like the director of a drama, for he felt deeply the inherent drama of student life. He was a director in that he wanted to elicit powerful, clear, insightful thinking and writing from the intersection of the emotional and intellectual dimensions of students. He encouraged quiet intensity, engagement and clarity of position and argument. He did not behave as if academic discourse and college writing should involve a persona of "free" intellects observing with perfect objectivity. He taught his students that such imaginary objectivity is a lie to the contingent character of socially embedded human existence. Ethos and connectedness are everything in teaching and were the hallmarks of John Spurk the man, the historian, the teacher, and the perpetual student.

I do not mean to imply that Professor Spurk was only a realist. The shimmering textures of his idealism were inspiring and magnetic. Indeed at times there was a bewildering radiance to the man. The amount of space in his intellectual terrain which was not open to compromise was large. At times I felt that this uncompromising space was too large, that it didn't allow me sufficient space to try out points of view. I asked him about this perception of mine. He responded with that wonderful and distinctive smile of his: very slightly impish, supportive and perpetually humane. There was, always, a silent core to the man, his *temenos*, his sacred space, inviolate, private. The smile was the only answer I ever got. I felt, even at the time, that silence was the best answer to the question because I needed to work out the answer myself. Each student, each human being must decide what in her or his life and thought is negotiable and what is not. Professor Spurk provided the support and the freedom to construct the answer personally. That dynamic and loving silence contained whole worlds of thought, and became the context for my continuing education.

When I graduated from NECC in 1969, in the first class of Professor Spurk instructed graduates, I went on to Boston University and then to graduate school in England. I had some superb teachers at Boston University and in PhD work in England. But I never had one that was better than John Spurk. The scholarship he would have produced, had he chosen to work at a research university, he infused into his students. His love of teaching was so great, that it left little room for scholarship outside of the realm of materials development for his students. John Spurk, NECC and community colleges in general are so crucial to our society because they give all to the teaching-learning enterprise. As we hear more and more often the national cry for American institutions of higher learning to give greater attention to teaching, community colleges become correspondingly more important.

Professor Eugene Connolly described the death of Professor John Spurk as “like a great tree falling on a horizon; it left this great space there that can never be filled.” But I can imagine the voice of John Spurk saying something like this: “let’s look at the image. The fact is that the image and comparison show more friendship and emotion than accuracy. The fact is that when a large tree thunders to the ground, its space will inevitably be filled. Surely not with the same shape, but it will be filled. Nature abhors a vacuum and community colleges grow good teachers.”

My purpose, here, is to introduce Professor Spurk rather than his history of NECC. Yet I find it very difficult to distinguish the two, and as President Dimitry said when we met to discuss my editing of Professor Spurk’s manuscript, “if anyone has been left out of the history, it is John Spurk himself.” His modesty caused him to try to make himself invisible in the history of an institution in which he was a major player.

Though he tried to make himself invisible in his history of the college, there is no chance that he will be forgotten by the college community. There are many reasons why this is so, but the chief reason is that he was a master teacher. John Spurk had a personal relationship with all of his students. He understood that learning is both profoundly personal and profoundly social. Moreover, he was quite aware that for undergraduate students, especially in their first year, learning feels merely personal. In spite of the competitive structure of grading, Professor Spurk helped students to measure the self against personal aspirations, not against peers.

Professor Spurk’s first year as a teacher at NECC, 1967, was also my first year as a college student. His Western Civilization course description suggests his approach to the teaching-learning enterprise. Rereading this document many years later, I re-experience how exciting his approach was. He was not playing the role of lecturer as performer, as the center of attention. Instead he was student-centered. He describes the course as a “dialogue” and “discussion.” He urges students to “try to see the ‘big picture’” and “not to accept any text, but to question it.”

Notice especially concepts that are new to you. Try to find one or two key factors which serve as examples of general trends. Each of the documents is a piece of evidence about the society that produced it. Try to find key passages which best sum up this evidence. For every document ask yourself: 1) Who wrote it? 2) What does it say? 3) How is it different from other documents? 4) What is the style or tone of the document (e.g., legal, scientific, pessimistic, poetic)? In both the text and the sources, ask questions as you read. Question everything.

In the first class, he spent half the hour talking about why it is necessary to question everything. My class notes underline the following reasons for questioning: 1) questioning is the basis of democracy; not to question is to be an obedient servant 2) questioning represents a critical attitude toward reality and thus holds out the possibility of social progress 3) it represents the necessary continuation of the child’s perpetual question “why?” If we lose the sense of the mystery of life, we’ve lost the magic of life. John Spurk and NECC provided me and many others the pure magic of transformational education.

Robert Eddy  
June, 2017

<https://english.wsu.edu/robert-eddy/>







John H. Spurk  
1935 - 1991

## Author's Acknowledgments

I would like to make some comment on the writing of this history, the availability of pertinent data, the avoidance of scholarly devices such as footnotes and bibliography, and finally, on the interest, encouragement and support of the many individuals who have helped bring a monumental task to conclusion in this form.

One day early in 1982, I received an envelope from President John R. Dimitry. It contained the book jacket for a newly published monograph about the first thirty years of a community college in Utah. An accompanying note asked if I felt that something of like nature could be written about Northern Essex in conjunction with the college's twenty-fifth anniversary. I responded that it both could and should be done and was immediately asked to undertake a project which would include both the development of a systematic institutional archives and the research and writing of this history.

The work began in the summer of 1982 with the inspection and organization of "archival" materials collected over the years and housed in a tiny office in the Library. It quickly became apparent that the historical data about the college were decentralized; their retrieval was frequently difficult and, in some instances, impossible. Appeals to faculty, staff and alumni were made to try to fill in the more important gaps in the record. Many individuals responded with encouragement and also by loaning or donating personal copies of missing catalogs, yearbooks, student and faculty handbooks, early photographs and similar items. The archival collection improved, though many gaps still remain. The beginnings of the college were humble, with small, temporary facilities and a small, overextended staff. Because of the several relocations of offices among six different sites during the sixties and then later among the seven buildings of the permanent campus, some data have simply disappeared. Since it began on a shoestring and was a poverty-stricken pilgrim especially for the first twelve of its twenty-five years, not everything about Northern Essex can be documented with total certainty.

For several academic years and summers; I followed the string of research and writing. Help was sought both within the college and from former NECC students and employees, as well as from individuals and organizations closely connected with the institution in its early years. The response was so productive and extensive that

it cannot be fully acknowledged here, but the gratitude of both the author and the college to all those who assisted in any way is full and heartfelt. In particular, the following individuals have each contributed to the project their time and talents in virtually unlimited measure: Presidents Harold Bentley and John Dimitry; type-script and design assistants Cindy Hideriotis, Julie Carey, Sheila Krim, and Caryl Taylor; critical readers Priscilla Bellairs, Paul Bevilacqua, Joe Brown, Gene

Connolly, Betty Coyne, Al Emerson, Tom Fallon, Sandra Fotinos, Malcolm Fryer, John Guarino, Chet Hawrylcw, Ruth Horton, Norm Landry, Patty McDermott, Bob McDonald, Bob Paul, John Peroni, Mary Prunty,

Dick Reilly, Joe Rizzo, Don Ruhl, Wendy Shaffer, Church Stafford, Barbara Webber and Mary Wilson. Their suggestions, on both content and style, were incorporated throughout the successive drafts and represent much of the merit of the final version. Whatever errors or omissions remain are my own and hopefully minor in nature.

Along with the help provided by those listed above and others interested in the project, a number of meetings were organized to recall and reminisce around major themes. These meetings were taped and now form a nuclear oral and video history of NECC. [Editor's addition: see college history videos at <https://digitalheritage.noblenet.org/necc/collections/show/6>]. It is a series which deserves to be continued and expanded in the future. How did Northern Essex arise in the first place? Long before the opportunities, there was the challenge. In the beginning was the dream.

Response to challenge and turning dream to reality are the stuff of which college histories are made. The opportunity to gather and tell this story has been a personal challenge and honor. For all the encouragement and help which have been given, both by the institution and by countless individual members of the NECC family, I am deeply grateful. I hope that every reader will find the story as fascinating and inspiring as its subject.

John H. Spurk  
June, 1989

## Dedication

This book is dedicated to John Spurr, and to the past, present and future students of Northern Essex Community College who look to NECC for help in the fulfillment of goals and dreams. We see NECC as a community institution central to the life and development of the region and of our state.

## The Birth of Northern Essex Community College

Throughout the nineteen-fifties, one dramatic feature of higher education in the United States became increasingly clear: there was not enough of it to go around. More and more citizens wanted the opportunity for education beyond high school. And given the demographic explosion of the post-World War II baby boom, there were more and more citizens voicing the desire for that chance. Existing facilities were overcrowded; except for the financially and educationally advantaged, it appeared that the doors to higher education would be closed to millions of Americans.

Nationally, the major response to this challenge was the community college movement, a movement that meant not just more, but a new kind of higher education. In the mid-eighties, there were some 1,219 community colleges serving annually over 11 million students, who comprised over 40 percent of all college students in the fifty states: An educational revolution had taken place. Chronologically, Massachusetts was a latecomer in that revolution. By the mid-fifties, effective and rapidly expanding community college systems were in operation in New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Florida, Michigan, California and elsewhere.

Awareness of the problem in this state surfaced in August of 1956, when the Massachusetts Legislature created a Special Commission Relative to the Operation and Structure of Junior Colleges in the Commonwealth and charged it to report its findings and recommendations by the end of that year. It was a Commission of eight members: two state senators, three state representatives and three persons appointed by the governor. The latter trio were all educators: Dean Francis Keppel (School of Education, Harvard University), Dr. J. Paul Mather (President, University of Massachusetts), and, significantly for NECC, Miss Dorothy M. Bell (President, Bradford Junior College).

On December 31, 1956, this Commission made a twenty-three page Report to the legislature. Its last paragraph states:

It is our opinion that what is really needed at this juncture is an extended survey and policy development involving participation by both private and public institutional leaders to develop long-range criteria that may be adequately presented to the General Court or to local area leaders.

This recommendation for an extended survey was acted on by Governor Foster Furcolo. On January 14, 1957, Furcolo asked the legislature to create a Special Commission on Audit of State Needs - Needs in Massachusetts Higher Education (With Special Reference to Community Colleges). The Commission was quickly authorized and appointed. Its final Report was submitted to the legislature on March 26, 1958. The 118 page Report was not only a classic of thorough, systematic study; it was also an educational landmark in the history of the Commonwealth because it contained proposed legislation for the creation of a statewide and state-financed system of public community colleges.

The Commission called for immediate action on plans to create a Board of Regional Community Colleges and, for each college subsequently established by that governing Board, another Board, a Regional Advisory Board composed of local citizens. Proposed legislation (House no. 3035) was attached as Appendix A. Almost immediately the Governor of Massachusetts was persuaded and determined to act. On July 1, 1958, he sent to the legislature a fifty-three page special message entitled "The Responsibility of the Commonwealth in Higher Education." It was based on the Report of the Special Commission. In it, Governor Furcolo argued eloquently that the Commonwealth could only fulfill its responsibilities by

1. Greatly strengthening the existing public institutions and
2. Creating immediately a system of regional community colleges.

He also attached to his message enabling legislation (Senate No. 760) "An Act Establishing a Massachusetts Board of Regional Community Colleges and Providing for the Establishment of Regional Community Colleges." This bill, with minor modifications, was the same as that proposed by the Special Commission. It took only three months to turn the proposal into law. The final version was approved as Chapter 605 of the Acts of 1958 on October 3 of that year.

The Massachusetts Board of Regional Community Colleges was quickly appointed. How would it go about its task? Where and when would it set up the new colleges? In one sense, the challenge was still only beginning. But the solution, in principle, was clear: the community college movement had arrived in Massachusetts.

The new Massachusetts Board of Regional Community Colleges (MBRCC) went to work on January 27, 1959. It did so without the benefit of the 110 million dollar budget which Governor Furcolo had requested of the legislature. That budget would have allowed for the immediate land acquisition, construction and furnishing of nine community colleges located throughout the state. Instead, the Board had to be content with having been created as a permanent state higher educational agency with a budget of one million dollars to begin planning and setting up the new

system. The low level of funding would require the new Board to set up the colleges in whatever existing buildings could be obtained at low or no cost, rather than in expensive new campuses. The dependence of the new system on funding from the state legislature was thus established at the outset and has remained the basic underlying feature of the system and, subsequently, of each of the community colleges in the Commonwealth. The door to growth had been opened, but the funds for growth would have to be earned by performance rather than promises.

After nearly a year of work, the new MBRCC submitted to Governor Furcolo on December 31, 1959 an extensive "Progress Report" which deserves some comment. In examining the letter of transmittal which accompanied the document, one might note that the first official address of the MBRCC was a small room in the state legislature.

Throughout this extensive report, the tone is one of optimism, creativity, and enthusiasm for the task: "Massachusetts community colleges can be what we make them."

One of the central themes is gradualism. The new Board realized that the system would have to be introduced piecemeal, college by college; it would be a phased-in process, rather than an immediate full-blown creation. The recommendation was to begin immediately in order to have a system of community colleges in operation by 1967. In the Introduction to its report, the MBRCC noted that it had already adopted some fundamental principles:

1. That the new system should not be developed at the expense of existing state-supported institutions of higher education, but rather in coordination with their further development.
2. That compensation for the teaching staffs of the existing state institutions was currently inadequate and should be increased.
3. That the new community colleges should *not be* started with salaries for teaching and administrative staffs "at the inadequate rates which are currently being paid for comparable positions in the state supported institutions of higher education in the Commonwealth."

Thus, even before the first college in the system opened, the new Board had raised the question of parity of compensation vis-a-vis both other states in the nation and the other segments within this state. This issue still remains.

The Progress Report then devoted twelve pages to restating and updating the "Case for Community Colleges in Massachusetts." It included emphasis on adult education, on linkages with the needs of industry and business and also on the projected role of the community colleges in meeting future demands for a skilled labor force. In this emphasis, the MBRCC was giving an early indication of the long-term curriculum direction which it hoped to set for the new system:

"On a nation-wide level; approximately 70 percent of the students in community colleges are enrolled in occupational programs of study."

It would take many years for the new system to reach such a ratio, because most of its early students were more interested in completing baccalaureate degrees than in training for technical positions and thus transfer programs became the mainstay of the first colleges in the system. But this emphasis on possible occupational programs did play a strong (in some cases decisive) role in helping the Board to decide where to locate its first colleges.

A subsequent section of the Progress Report dealt with the work done by the Board during its first year of operation. Instead of pursuing independent centralized research, it asked for the help of citizens' groups all across the state in documenting regional needs for community colleges. Several key features of a master plan were set by the Board at the outset

1. The colleges should be within "commuting distance" for the students.
2. All colleges should offer both transfer and occupational curriculums.
3. There should be a "cultural or general education" component in all programs.
4. The design of occupational programs for each college should involve "close relations . . . with industry and business, educators, lay people, etc."
5. Each college established would have a local advisory board appointed by the Governor to advise the MBRCC "concerning the development of occupational curricula and other related matters."

Along with these basic policies, the Board also listed six separate functions which it expected each new college to perform:

1. Lower division (transfer) education
2. Occupational education
3. General education—here defined as "the training needed by all students to prepare themselves to become more effective and responsible family members, workers, and citizens on local, state, and national levels.
4. Guidance
5. Adult education
6. Community Service

With regard to choosing sites for colleges in the system, the Progress Report mentioned four criteria which it proposed to use in setting priorities: "greatest need, population, interest of people, and services rendered by existing institutions of higher education." It discussed each of these briefly and, importantly for Northern Essex, stated that

"The presence or absence of other college facilities in an area ... should be given close attention."

The Board realized soon that the need would probably be more urgent in



regions without adequate college facilities.

The year 1959 thus had seen the MBRCC launch its effort; the year 1960 would not only bring into existence the first of the community colleges in Massachusetts, but also the decision to start three others in 1961, among them Northern Essex. Why did this northeastern corner of the state get such an early priority, and why was the city of Haverhill chosen as the site?

The two questions were closely related. In at least one sense, the story of Northern Essex is a "Tale of Three Cities and a Town:" Lowell, Lawrence, Haverhill, and Amesbury. In 1960, neither Lowell nor Lawrence responded to the opportunity to become the regional community college site. In Amesbury and Haverhill, however, local citizen groups actively began to build a case for presentation to the MBRCC. Officials of the Board were quick to inform the Amesbury group that the town was simply too small and located too far from the center of the region to be chosen. Thus, by the spring of 1960, Amesbury leaders decided to drop their own campaign and to support Haverhill in its bid. This realistic adjustment greatly strengthened the Haverhill application, by removing any controversy over location within the region. What remained to be proved was why this region of the Commonwealth should be chosen before the other competing regions.

Within Haverhill, even before 1960, there had been a perceived need to make higher education locally available. Both the University of Massachusetts Extension division and Boston University had been approached about starting some type of branch campus in the city and both had shown some concrete interest in such a project. But the times were more favorable for the introduction of a low-cost public institution and for a two-year, as opposed to a four-year program. The MBRCC's Progress Report galvanized the Haverhill community into action in the spring of 1960. The focal point was the Greater Haverhill Chamber of Commerce and the leader of the effort was its far-sighted, aggressive Director, Malcolm L. Fryer. Under the Chamber of Commerce banner, a task force designated as the Educational Needs Committee was created early in 1960 and embarked on an intensive campaign to convince the MBRCC that it should open a college in Haverhill in 1961. That the community supported this effort quickly became apparent in a number of ways.

The mood of the city at that time was reflected, for example, at the annual B'nai B'rith award banquet, held on April 23, 1960. The recipient of the main award was Miss Dorothy M. Bell, the President of Bradford Junior College who was cited for her "enlightened educational guidance, her civic leadership and her contribution to the cultural enrichment of the city of Haverhill." The main speaker at the banquet was the United States Undersecretary of Health, Education and Welfare, Bertha S. Adkins, who took the occasion not just to laud Dorothy Bell but also to note the "exciting development" of the community college movement and to encourage the Haverhill community in its quest without eclipsing the traditional private junior college, the proposal for a public community college was clearly foremost in mind. And Dorothy Bell had not only served on the Special Commission of 1956, but would also become one of the charter members of the Northern Essex Community College Regional Advisory Board when it was appointed some nine months later. Some of those in at-

tendance on that evening were also very much involved in the new college effort. Two of the principals, Rabbi Abraham I. Jacobson and Dr. Maury J. Tye, were members of the newly formed Educational Needs Committee. Even though the Undersecretary did not bring with her any promises of federal assistance, the project promoters had heard some allusions to the National Defense Education Act of 1957, to federal student loan programs, and to federal encouragement. All of these would later become important factors in the life of Northern Essex. For the moment, they served to intensify public interest.

The work of the Educational Needs Committee was swift, dramatic, and singularly effective. The membership represented a cross-section of Haverhill civic leaders. They worked with a remarkable sense of bipartisan community spirit and in close concert with all of the area state legislators. During the winter and spring of 1960, this group, working closely with Mr. Fryer, studied the items asked for by the MBRCC, and began to put a "Haverhill Case" together. They circulated and then tabulated the survey questionnaires which the Board had provided. They met on April 22 with John V. Costello, the Board consultant on community affairs and later the longtime MBRCC liaison to the state legislature. He gave strong encouragement, after being favorably impressed by the quality, activity, enthusiasm, and determination of the local group. A news article about this meeting in the *Haverhill Journal* (the city at that time had two major daily newspapers) carried the strong but cautious headline "*Regional College Seen Possibility*." Later headlines used the words "probability," "strong likelihood," "good chance," "proposed" and, ultimately, "approved."

From late April into mid-June, both city newspapers and *The Amesbury News* gave immediate and full coverage to the fast-breaking story. All three papers also ran editorials urging public support. Both in the short run and over the long term, the area press was able to avoid making the community college proposal appear to be the pet project of one particular editor or newspaper, who could then claim credit if the dream was realized. There was no press war; the proposal enjoyed universal support.

The hard political facts of 1960 were such that no single person could have secured the college for the region. Bi-partisan and genuinely regional support was imperative in order to convince the Board and the state legislature. Since the Greater Haverhill Chamber of Commerce was an apolitical agency, it, rather than any particular political leader, was the perfect vehicle for demonstrating the community need. This is not to detract from the herculean efforts of key individual legislators of that era, such as Senator James Rurak or Representative Francis Bevilacqua, but merely to underscore the point that the Board was looking for broad-based community support as a *sine qua non* element in its site decisions. Fortunately, Haverhill was able to muster and demonstrate precisely that kind of support and to keep the project from becoming identified with only one individual. A unique and major opportunity to organize and demonstrate such support came on May 5, 1960 at a regional meeting held at the Greater Haverhill Chamber of Commerce and led by Mr. H. Louis Farmer, the Chairman of the Educational Needs Committee. It was attended by several Essex County legislators and prominent businessmen as well as school superintendents, high school principals, and guidance directors from the following communities or school districts: Newburyport, Amesbury, Georgetown,

Masconomet, Pentucket, Haverhill, Groveland, Newbury, West Newbury, Boxford, Topsfield and Middleton. Also present to interact with this group (and surely also to assess their numbers and seriousness) was the MBRCC representative, John V. Costello.

This meeting more than achieved its purpose, the regional endorsement of the effort. It made a strong favorable impression on Mr. Costello who told those present that, although Haverhill would face stiff competition from other parts of the state (most notably from Worcester and Cape Cod), it now stood a good chance of selection as the third site - *if* an appropriate building (capacity 600-800) were made available and *if* the high school student survey indicated sufficient interest. This survey of high school juniors was already being taken at Haverhill High School; now all of the other high schools represented at this meeting agreed to conduct it immediately and to forward their results to the Chamber of Commerce, which also promised to look into the question of finding a suitable building. Mr. Costello advised the group to look westward and to include Lawrence and Lowell as part of its base. He also mentioned that a group in the Gloucester area was beginning to show interest in having their region considered as the site of an "Essex County" or "North Shore" community college. But, he indicated, it would focus primarily on instruction, have few extra-curricular activities, and be a commuter college costing the student about 340 dollars per year with the state subsidizing each student by about 400 dollars per year.

These figures of the MBRCC are quite interesting in the context of the 1984 Board of Regents proposal that tuition should constitute one-third of per student total cost. Indeed, one of the distinguishing features and strong selling points of the new system was its financial structure. On the national level, most community colleges were being funded either completely by local taxes or from a formula under which tuition, local taxes and state subsidy each provided one-third of the costs. Massachusetts, in fact, was the first of the states to establish community colleges solely with state funding. The motivation for this plan was egalitarian: to ensure that the colleges would be opened where needed, and not just where they could be locally financed. State funding also removed a difficult obstacle for local planning groups such as the Greater Haverhill Chamber of Commerce: it had only to show local need and interest, not local wherewithal. The area school committees and city/town administration never had to worry about budgeting for the new community colleges, which, in fact, were welcomed as an economic asset. Another logical consequence of full state funding was, of course, that many more localities entered the site competition. "Why not apply? - They're free!"

Less than a week after the May 5 meeting, an editorial in *The Haverhill Journal* of May 10 called attention to the need for the city to provide a building as part of its proposal. The sense of urgency and competition was clear:

If Haverhill can make a building available, or suggest some means of accommodating the space needs of a regional college, it would undoubtedly be able to override Plymouth's claim.

We suggest to Haverhill's educational people and to the members of the Educational Committee of the local Chamber that they attempt to coordinate the present school housing problem in Haverhill with our need for a regional community college. In that way Haverhill's cause can be best advanced, we trust.

The reference to the "educational people" illustrated the key role played at this juncture by the Haverhill school administration (in particular of Superintendent Stanley L. Wright) and by the Haverhill School Committee. It was, for instance, the School Committee which authorized the survey of high school juniors. And that survey was the single, most important element in building the case. By the first week of June, the survey results



*The Greenleaf School*

were in, not only from Haverhill High School, but from eight other area high schools. These polls of 1,106 high school juniors showed that 203 said they would definitely attend a regional college in Haverhill if it opened in 1961 and another 468 indicated that they might. Such figures did not include any potential students from the Lawrence or Lowell areas, but were already quite substantial. Again Mr. Costello appeared impressed. He indicated that a Haverhill site could also expect students from New Hampshire communities (at a higher, out-of-state tuition), from Lowell and Lawrence, and also "undoubtedly from the North Shore area until a similar college is established there."

The population was clearly there. What about a facility? By the first week of June, 1960, The Chamber of Commerce effort to persuade the MBRCC to begin a college in Haverhill in 1961 was about two-thirds com-

pleted: the need, the student interest, and the regional citizen support had been effectively demonstrated.

With the MBRCC so clearly and actively interested in Haverhill as a possibility, all that really remained was to see if the city could and would provide a suitable facility. Haverhill at the time was grappling with serious space and facilities problems for the elementary and junior high schools as well as for Haverhill High School and Haverhill Trade School. The city faced serious money problems. How would it respond to the idea of donating a building?

A gift was needed. That was the message of John V. Costello when he met again with the Chamber group on June 7. At that same meeting, he indicated that no definite decisions about 1961 should be expected until September of 1960. The Educational Needs Committee Co-chairman, Dr. Philip A. Faraci, then asked if the state might be persuaded to step-up its program by opening three, instead of just two, community colleges in 1961, and Mr. Costello indicated that it might, depending on a really aggressive and effective local campaign. He also added that if the city turned over a building, it would be renovated by the state at no cost to the local community. Then, if the college was successful, it would ultimately become a new campus with new buildings and at that point the original donated building would be returned to the city. The economics of the plan were very attractive. Here was an opening.

The MBRCC met on June 9 and went on record as favoring the establishment of a community college in Haverhill. This decision was conveyed on June 10 by John V. Costello to two of the area legislators, Representatives Benjamin H. White of Groveland and Edward S. Morrow of Haverhill. The conversion of dream into reality was starting much sooner than anyone had expected. The student interest survey had simply overwhelmed the Board and convinced it to act immediately.

In making its decision on Haverhill, the Board had also made it very clear that start-up was contingent on the city providing adequate and suitable space. The Cogswell School it described as "entirely inadequate" since it foresaw a first-year enrollment of 300-400 students and a second-year enrollment of 600-700 students. In commenting on the announcement, all local officials pledged that they would quickly come up with whatever it would take to constitute an acceptable home for the college.

During the school year of 1959-1960, the Cogswell School had been vacant, but the Greenleaf School was in use. The plan now shifted to reactivate Cogswell as an elementary school, thus making the Greenleaf School



*State Senator James Rurak*

available for the college.

When the School Committee met on Tuesday evening, June 14, heard Superintendent Wright ask for designation of the Greenleaf School as the facility to be offered to the MBRCC. Mr. Fryer of the Chamber of Commerce spoke in support and had with him as resource people, Nicholas J. Peterson, President of the Chamber, as well as H. Louis Farmer, Jr. and Dr. Philip A. Faraci, the co-chairmen of the Educational Needs Committee. The School Committee endorsed the use of the Greenleaf School at this meeting. Haverhill, in effect, was now saying "Have a building, want a college." The School Committee action was immediately communicated to the MBRCC, which promised to send its representatives back to Haverhill to tour the proposed facility within the week, on Monday, June 20. This visit occurred as scheduled; Walter M. Taylor and John V. Costello toured the Greenleaf School and were favorably impressed. In Mr. Taylor's words: "I'm very pleased with what I've seen here today."

Somewhat ironically, the caption on a photo of the tour group which appeared the next day in the *Journal* began "NO PARKING PROBLEM!" Time and student response were to debunk that one.

In as much as Mr. Taylor could only recommend a course of action to the MBRCC, it was surely helpful that he had come on a fine June day, that John Costello had already been very impressed by the Haverhill effort, and that once again the Chamber of Commerce, represented by Messrs. Fryer, Faraci and Wright had accompanied him on the tour. Before leaving, he made the suggestion that the city should consider selling the Greenleaf School to the state for \$1, with a provision for its reversion to the city when permanent quarters were established.

The preliminary tour was, in fact, so successful that just three days later, John Costello came back to the Greenleaf School, accompanied by Bert Phinney Sr. of the state Division of Building Construction to begin making estimates on its conversion for college use. Operational costs, including custodial care, gas, electricity, and fuel oil were studied as well as some remodeling possibilities such as converting part of the large second floor auditorium into a library. Their findings were positive, and the strong momentum of the project was again evidenced: by July 1, Superintendent Wright had been informed by the MBRCC that it would accept the Greenleaf School and wished to take it over in the near future in order to begin the renovations. The formal and unanimous approval of the MBRCC was voted at its regular monthly meeting at the University Club in Boston on July 14. Assured by John Costello that municipal officials in Lowell and Lawrence had no objection to the Haverhill site, the Board, at the same meeting, earmarked \$75,000 of its funds for the renovation work. The important new concept of regionalization was proving viable.

The summer of 1960 was also decisive with regard to funding - the last remaining essential ingredient. In Massachusetts, the question of the annual state budget had long been (and remains even today) part of the "rites of spring." The state fiscal year (FY) begins on July 1 and concludes on June 30 of the subsequent year. Except for emergency situations requiring special budget legislation, the normal expectation is that all state agencies should receive their annual appropriation as part of the state budget recommended in early winter and passed by the legislature (usually) by July 1.

This process was going on in the very weeks and months of the Haverhill campaign to secure a college. But, for the college to be funded and operational in 1961, some preliminary funding was required for fiscal year 1961, i.e., for the period July 1, 1960 through June 30, 1961. Such money had already been built into the budget for Berkshire Community College. But when the MBRCC decided on June 9, 1960 to open three additional schools in 1961, it had to submit a request for specific funding. Given the Board's location in the State House, and the close contact which Mr. Costello had developed with the legislative leadership, this was fairly easy to expedite. The Senate Ways and Means Committee, then working on the FY1961 budget, was simply asked to add in an item of \$49,200 to provide the sum of \$16,400 for each of the three proposed colleges (one in Boston, one on Cape Cod and one in Haverhill). By June 13, the Committee had already considered the item and recommended that it be approved by the full Senate. Each of the institutions was to use this appropriation to fund the appointment of a director, selection of a site, clerical help, and the planning of its program. It was noteworthy that the college itself had not yet even been named, nor had its precise location been agreed upon, but its case had been well prepared. If the full Senate approved the Ways and Means recommendation, then the college would become, from that moment, a reality. If it refused, then the college would most probably have to wait another year for the money to begin functioning. Such approval was far from automatic; the Senate was a fiscally conservative body and there was the surprise element of creating three instead of two new institutions. Would the senators agree with the MBRCC strategy, or might they individually feel that their respective sections of the Commonwealth were more in need than the northeast corner of the state? Why rush, especially for a district whose Senator, James Rurak, was a newcomer, a freshman? The debate in the full Senate was scheduled for June 15.

Fortunately, Senator Rurak appreciated the immensity of his challenge. With help from John Costello and the Chamber of Commerce group, he prepared a powerful dossier on the community need and support. He lobbied "frantically" for several days, buttonholing Senate colleagues on Beacon Hill to ask for their votes. On Wednesday, June 15, the debate on the Senate floor took place. It was long and the expected strenuous opposition did materialize, but the Haverhill Senator carried the day: the appropriation passed on a standing vote. The college was in business! The front-page bold print of the next day's *Haverhill Journal* summed up the situation:

**Rurak's Battle Successful**  
**COLLEGE VIRTUALLY ASSURED**  
**Senator Praised For Performance**

Thus, by the end of June, 1960, the local community had essentially achieved its goal: there would be a regional community college in the Merrimack Valley and Haverhill would be its home. It was a regional, rather than a city accomplishment. It was the accomplishment of many people. It was a promise soon to be delivered.





# First Steps: Choosing a Director and Finding a Campus

Who would head this new college? Would the state be able to complete renovation of the facility within a year? And would the new college be able to plan and carry out the many details of organization and logistics involved? The challenge was immense. Enormous enthusiasm, extraordinary energy, and sheer determination were needed to meet it.

These characteristics came together in the person of the college's first employee and its major builder, Harold Bentley. For fifteen years, he was to shape and lead the new institution. From 1960 to 1975, he brought his many talents and boundless drive to those tasks. More importantly, he brought a spirit, a sense of mission and a personality which were to energize both his work and his creation.

Orphaned in early childhood, he had come to the United States from England in 1923. He had known the experience of working (at age twelve!) in the textile mills of northwestern England and, at age eighteen, in those of southeastern New England, in Fall River and New Bedford. America was opportunity. He placed his hopes and his faith first in education. Lured by the "call of the West," he settled in Iowa and attended Grinnell College, then transferred to Penn College where he earned the baccalaureate.

During the course of his education, Harold Bentley deepened his own religious faith and decided on a career in the ministry. He returned East, earned a Master of Divinity degree from Hartford Theological Seminary Foundation in Hartford, Connecticut and was ordained a minister. Then came his "first career" in pastoral work. After a two-year return to England, he served successively as Director of Christian Work at the University of New Hampshire, Chaplain to the New Hampshire Legislature, pastor in the parishes of the First Congregational Church in Derry, New Hampshire, and, later, in Spencer, Massachusetts. While in Derry, he married Urita Pote, daughter of a distinguished professor of Physics at Tufts University, and together they began to raise their family of four children.

While serving as pastor of the church in Spencer, Harold Bentley became first a part-time, then a full-time member of the faculty of Worcester Junior College, a long-established, private, two-year school connected with the Worcester YMCA. His range of subjects matched his broad intellectual interests: philosophy, literature and psychology. By getting into teaching, he was being drawn into his "second career." In 1950, on the petition of its faculty, he was appointed President of Worcester Junior College. In that decade of the fifties, he guided Worcester Junior College through a period of sustained growth and innovation. The day division enrollment nearly quadrupled (going from 190 to 750) and the number of evening students almost doubled, from 600 to 1,100. By 1960, he was clearly a success in higher education as well as in the ministry. He had served as President of the New England Junior College Council and as a Director of the American Association of Junior Colleges. His interests and activities were wide-ranging. He was a member of the American Sociological Society, Phi Kappa Delta Fraternity, the Massachusetts Schoolmaster's Club, Torch Honor Society, the National Society for the Study of Education, the National Education Association, the National Adult Education Association, the Sales Executives Club, the Society for the Advancement of Management, and the Rotary Club. In New England education circles, he was a recognized leader in the accreditation work of the New England Association of Secondary Schools and Colleges and was familiarly known as "Mr. Junior College."

Thus, in 1960, Harold Bentley appeared to be very well settled. He enjoyed esteem and security in his job, and had the joys and challenges of parenthood. Could a man in such circumstances seriously contemplate taking up a major new challenge, a "third career" Many would not. Harold Bentley did. In so doing, he reaffirmed his vitality and vigor, and he also found a new spark of faith in a new calling, that of being one of the pioneers in the community college movement in Massachusetts.

On June 29, the legislature had passed an annual state budget of \$454.9 million; this included a specific appropriation of \$16,800 to cover the personnel costs of establishing a college in Haverhill. That same day, Walter Taylor announced that, for its next meeting on July 14, he would present to the MBRCC "definite recommendations for the appointment of the new director at Haverhill."

That was a bit too ambitious. The MBRCC did meet as scheduled. But its only action concerning Haverhill was to authorize Mr. Taylor to solicit suggestions for a name for the new institution. He turned this task over to the Greater Haverhill Chamber of Commerce and there was no further news concerning the directorship until the end of August, when the Haverhill press reported that Mr. Taylor had indicated that the appointment would be made within two weeks at the MBRCC meeting of September 12. By this time, the Board had received twenty applications for the position. There was no screening committee or local input into the process of selection; such procedures came much later in the life of the system.

The Board convened in Boston on September 22 and, at that meeting, it designated directors for two of the colleges scheduled to open in 1961 - Harold Bentley for Haverhill and Dr. Irving H. Bartlett for Cape Cod. The announcement of the Board's choice was made in both Haverhill pa-

pers on Monday, September 26. The articles were essentially biographical introductions. But in Worcester, on the same date, the *Worcester Telegram* editorialized about the appointment:

One of the chief questions posed by the state's program for junior colleges is whether adequate staffs can be recruited to man the new facilities...

If the state program can continue to attract persons of Bentley's caliber, its stature will obviously be enhanced.

Along with welcoming editorials, both of the Haverhill dailies also lost no time in interviewing the new director and publicizing the results. Both ran extensive reports on Tuesday, September 27. The *Gazette* report was captioned "Bentley Wants Quality College in Haverhill." In it, he appealed for ongoing community support and pledged to accept nothing less than "a good, quality college" whose curriculum would be based on the "actual needs of the area." He expressed his own eagerness to build, staff, and then run such a college which represented a "terrific opportunity" for the people of the area.

*The Journal* article on the same day highlighted another aspect of the job, its challenge. The reporter, Dan Corcoran, captioned his story "Challenge Seen by Bentley in Accepting College Post." It was a masterly interview which brought out Harold Bentley's special knack of identifying himself totally with his work and also the intensity of his optimism about what a junior college could mean to the community. It noted that his resignation from Worcester Junior College would be effective on November 1. He had only ten months in which to create a new college!

While Harold Bentley did face an immense challenge, there were several very helpful factors operating. First there was much residual enthusiasm and elation in the city over its selection. The Chamber of Commerce group stood ready to welcome and assist him and, equally important, it was prepared to bow out of the picture when no longer needed. The press had given him a totally positive introduction to the community so that he didn't need to sell himself; he could get on immediately with the work of explaining and selling the college itself. Coming to Haverhill as an outsider gave him the chance for acceptance by the whole community; he had no mortgages to any local person or group. Finally, he could count on the interest and support of the public school system in Haverhill through the School Committee and his friendship with its Superintendent, Stanley Wright. In a real sense, he had a missionary role to perform - to explain the educational "good news" of the community college and to attract active converts to it. But the mission territory was very receptive and could even offer help in the task.

Not surprisingly, therefore, a high percentage of his time in the first few months was spent traveling to all corners of the region, often speaking to several groups on a particular day, making the college known, explaining its advantages and answering questions about it. High school assemblies, service club luncheons, Parent-Teacher Associations, local branches of the League of Women Voters, industrial facilities, church fairs and suppers

- all were visited and told about the new educational opportunity in the area. "Mr. Junior College" quickly became "Mr. Community College" in northern and eastern Massachusetts. When not specifically trying to recruit students for his own institution, he was explaining and promoting the community college concept in areas which were also possible sites. This was appropriate because, with only four institutions scheduled for 1961, the MBRCC had not put any narrow geographical restrictions on its directors. Tightly defined "service areas" simply were not a problem at that time. And to some extent, the success of the first four community colleges, would depend on the rapid and state-wide expansion of the system. Mr. Bentley never lost sight of the big picture; he was very aware of the need for his service to the system as a whole. Another example of the "system consciousness" of the early days was the referral of student applicants from one community college to another. The quota given to Northern Essex for its first year (1961) was 150 students. But the missionary was too successful; by the summer of 1961, that quota had been exceeded; approximately 300 students had applied and 186 had been accepted. Those for whom there was no space available at Northern Essex were encouraged to attend Massachusetts Bay Community College in Watertown, where space was still available, and a number did so.

By early November of 1960 the new institution had an enthusiastic on-site Director. But it was nameless. The almost daily news stories about it could only

refer to the "new college," the "regional junior college," the "as yet unnamed school," the "area community college," or even as one reporter put it, "the incognito college." The baby needed its own name; the choice of a name was reserved to its parent, the MBRCC. The search for the right name had, in fact, been going on since July 15, 1960 when Walter Taylor had requested the public to send in suggestions to the Greater Haverhill Chamber of Commerce. He indicated



that an appropriate name should transcend the city of Haverhill, that it should reflect "the entire northeast area of the state which the junior college is designed to serve."

Suggestions were accepted by the Chamber of Commerce until September 15 and then were forwarded to the MBRCC for ultimate consideration and choice. There is no trace of the actual entries, but some of

the suggestions were: Whittier Community College, Pentucket Community College, Merrimack Community College and Merrimack Valley Community College. The latter two suggestions were strong possibilities but ultimately not chosen because of their similarity to the name of Merrimack College in North Andover. Similarly, Pentucket, the name of the major native regional Indian tribe, was dropped from consideration because of the proximity of the Pentucket Regional High School. And despite the greatness of the man and the poet, "Whittier" was identified only with the Haverhill-Amesbury part of a much larger region.

In any case, the MBRCC had said it would select a name in October and did consider the possibilities, but it decided to postpone its final choice until the following month. At the MBRCC meeting on Thursday, November 10, 1960, the Board voted unanimously to adopt the motion of Harvard Professor Seymour E. Harris that the school should officially be named Northern Essex Community College. It was an apt choice. "Northern Essex Community College" which at first seemed a rather long and novel name, has worked its way into the vernacular. Especially in its short forms ("NECC," "NECCO" and "Northern Essex") it has become a byword throughout the Merrimack Valley. Despite its broadness, even it was not quite large enough to encompass the reality of the student population, some of which is from areas of Middlesex county including Lowell and its environs, or, of course, the segment of students from neighboring southeastern New Hampshire.

Despite all the efforts to avoid confusion with other colleges, there were mistaken references to "Northeastern Essex" and "Northeastern College" in the first few months of its existence. But "Northern Essex" caught on and has always seemed "right" for the institution. The only serious proposal to alter the name came in the mid-sixties when a bill was introduced, but not approved, in the state legislature to change the name to "John F. Kennedy Community College." Thus, by mid-November of 1960, the new college had an office, a staff, a director and a name. It could turn to the myriad of activities needed to make it operational by the following September. The story of Northern Essex for the next ten months is almost completely an account of Harold Bentley's efforts to prepare for the opening of its doors. The life of the institution coincided with the daily agenda of its founder. A small sample of his key activities during those months is listed below. Following Harold Bentley's calendar in a purely chronological fashion shows several things:

1. How extensive and varied the work was
2. The need to be working simultaneously along several fronts
3. The acceptance and support given by the region.

#### Selected Activities of Harold Bentley, November - December 1960

November 1 - Recruiting: Speaks on panel at meeting of Merrimack Valley Guidance Association Conference held at Charles Steak House, (later the China Blossom), North Andover.

Shares panel on higher education opportunities with admissions

representatives from Lowell State College, Lawrence General Hospital, Merrimack College, and Lowell Technological Institute (whose panelist, Director of Admissions Dr. Arthur Haley, later became the founding President of Mt. Wachusett Community College in Gardner, MA)

November 7 - Curriculum: Meets with Superintendent of Schools Stanley Wright concerning nature of the curriculum.

November 16 - Recruiting: Speaks at meeting of Billerica League of Women Voters on "Public Regional Community Colleges and How They Pertain to Us in Massachusetts."

November 17 - Curriculum: Meets with Haverhill school principals, Director of Haverhill Trade School, Thomas F. Garvey and Dr. Robert T. Lambert, Director of Hale Hospital. Recruiting: Excerpt from a talk to Haverhill League of Women Voters (President Mrs. Myron H. Ritter):

"The school hours will be according to a compact schedule, so students who work will not be kept too late in the afternoon. Evening classes are a probability."

November 22 - Recruiting: Speaks at Haverhill Kiwanis Club luncheon. Predicts rapid expansion, outgrowing the Greenleaf School within five years. Cites need for a new permanent location with more land area.

November 22 - Recruiting: Speaks to senior class at Pentucket Regional High School.

November 28 - Recruiting: Speaks at meeting of Leominster League of Women Voters.

November 29 - Recruiting: Makes a two-hour presentation at meeting of Haverhill Central Council PTA.

November 30 - Recruiting: Serves as panelist on higher education program at Burlington High School sponsored by Burlington League of Women Voters.

December 5 - Recruiting: Speaks to the Haverhill Community Council luncheon at YWCA. Stresses strong guidance and promises "the best faculty available."

This massive, one-man missionary effort created so much interest in the new college that on December 31, 1960, the *Haverhill Gazette* could report

Although formal application blanks are not ready, many prospective students have already applied for enrollment in Haverhill's new community college scheduled to open in September. These applications will not be recognized until the proper machinery is set up by Harold Bentley, college director.

His major task was to recruit students throughout the area. Clearly, he focused on that aspect. At almost all of these recruiting sessions, audiences asked him about the possibility of evening courses and, while he could not promise anything definite for the immediate future, he was made keenly aware of the need for adult education offerings to be met as soon as pos-

sible. Another spinoff of these talks was that he became acquainted with many area high school counselors and teachers, some of whom, like the young mathematics teacher at Pentucket Regional High School, Norman Landry, so impressed him that they, too, were recruited to join the new college as part of its faculty.

Another part of the challenge was to create the educational facility in physical terms, to supervise the renovation and furnishing of the Greenleaf School so that the college could open, as promised, in September, 1961. But in this area, Mr. Bentley could not act independently or even make his own calendar. Ownership of the building belonged to the MBRCC once the Haverhill City Council had voted (as it did initially on July 8 and reaffirmed on August 2, 1960) to sell the building to the state. The transfer had been recommended and facilitated by School Superintendent Stanley Wright. The MBRCC was so confident things would work out when it met on July 14, that it had earmarked \$75,000 of its available funds for making the building ready for college use.

The MBRCC had also begun to plan the renovation project before Mr. Bentley's appointment. On August 16, 1960, the MBRCC hired the architectural firm of Elroy C. Webber of Springfield to draw up specifications for the remodeling project. And on September 19, still three days before the MBRCC announced Mr. Bentley's appointment, the site was visited and a preliminary inspection made by the architect, accompanied by the MBRCC Executive Director, Walter Taylor, and also by Berton Phinney, as examining engineer of the state Division of Building Construction, an agency which was to later have a major role in the development and realization of plans for the permanent campus. The inspection revealed the need for major changes to the plumbing, heating, and electrical systems. Part of the building needed a new roof; the stairways required structural reinforcement; new flooring and extensive re-plastering were needed; science and engineering laboratories had to be planned and the interior completely repainted. On the exterior, floodlighting was to be installed, the grading and drainage of the grounds improved and, if funds permitted, an area of the school yard paved for parking.

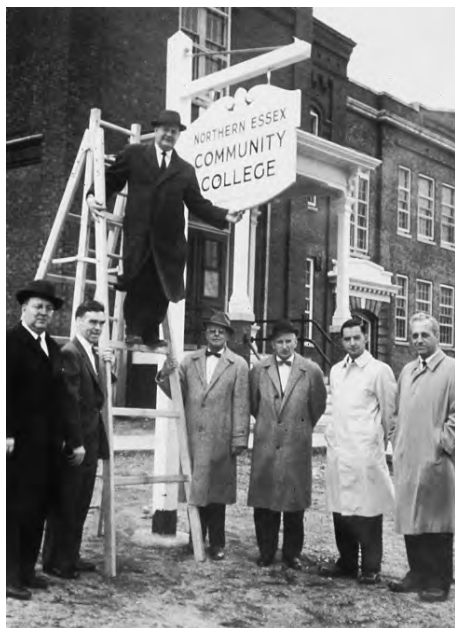
On June 23, 1961, the bids were opened. Six companies bid on the project; \$128,700 was the low bid and \$149,915 the high bid. Within a week, the Division of Building Construction awarded the contract to the low bidder, Vincent Caputo of Boston, and work on the project began during the first week of July.

Visitors to the Greenleaf School during those months were as liable to find the Director in overalls as in the shirt and tie usually associated with a college leader. A local insurance agent, Frederick E. Malcolm, who wanted to provide coverage for the student body, found Mr. Bentley painting a corridor. Olga Williams, who came to be interviewed for a part-time teaching position, found him perched atop a ladder installing a lighting fixture. No doubt he had other disguises.

The immediate challenge was to make the college open on time. A false start could have badly damaged its credibility. The students seeking admission might not have minded being interviewed out on the front porch of the school, but they did need to be assured that things would be ready for classes a few weeks later. They, too, were taking a chance and making an act

of faith in Northern Essex. Somehow (by force of personality, perhaps?), Mr. Bentley kept things moving. He persuaded others, especially the new staff, to join him *unpaid* on those hot days of July and August in efforts to help the contractor meet the imminent deadline. Shipments of furniture and supplies were arriving, laboratories and the library required setting-up, and the calendar was running fast. People responded to the challenge. No one felt that a task was outside of their job description.

The renovation project was pushed to substantial completion by the end of September, 1961. Classes, originally set for September 18, began instead on September 25. For more than 10 years, the Greenleaf School was to provide a crowded but appropriate and satisfactory base for the



college. In 1972, it was returned to the city of Haverhill and resumed its life as an elementary school. To-day one must look very closely to find any traces of the college campus era. On a late afternoon tour one day in 1983, faculty members Bob Paul, John Finneran, Dean Norm Landry and the author could find only two visible reminders: the large vent which had been installed to make a chemistry lab feasible and a small blue and gold Northern Essex decal affixed to the front window of what was once the college bookstore. But there were some echoes in the halls and a lot of memories.

Preparing to open a college involved much more than has been suggested thus far; recruiting students and remodeling the facility

were major portions of a complex mosaic of preparation which stretched from the summer of 1960 to opening day, when the congratulatory bouquets from Bradford Junior College, the Haverhill public school system, the Bradford Snack Shop, and other well-wishers arrived.

First, there was the area of public interest, support, and expectation. Could a community college be all things to all people? Discovering what the community needed and wanted, and what its priorities were, was essential. The Director did this largely by getting out into the community and listening.

One dimension of community expectation was for the college to serve the region not just academically, but culturally as well. Even in the first glow of the good news that the MBRCC had chosen Haverhill, this call for something more than courses and programs was heard. In an editorial of July 22, 1960, which it entitled "The Beginning" the *Haverhill Journal* predicted:

The regional community college will give all residents of this re-



gion a center of cultural activity. In not too long a time there will undoubtedly be many events held under the auspices of the institution which will be of great interest to our citizenry. Lectures, concerts, and theatrical presentations will draw a large audience.

The same editorial also expressed confidence that the college would represent opportunity for "older citizens" wanting to "satisfy their thirst for additional education and to make them more valuable in their work." Much of the history of Northern Essex consists of efforts to respond to both of these missions.

The essential mission, however, was the academic one. What kind of programs would the college offer? Who would be admitted, and how, and when? Who would teach? What kind of library should be planned? To these basic decisions, Mr. Bentley also had to devote time and attention. He would be putting down the foundation for the college's essential mission.

In general, Mr. Bentley was an educational conservative. He always remained open to new possibilities and approaches, but he was committed to doing only those things where quality could be assured. He was realistic about what could be offered by a small faculty in a limited facility, and thus designed a modest initial curriculum, one quite similar to the program he had overseen at Worcester Junior College.

The first Northern Essex quasi-catalog was a mimeographed fourteen-page, primitive, and inexpensive stapled booklet which looked like an examination bluebook and was entitled "Tentative Information Bulletin." This was put together by Mr. Bentley and Phyllis Comeau within weeks of his arrival on the job and was run off and distributed to area high schools and taken wherever he went in search of students. The last eight pages were curriculum outlines for six programs he had decided to offer in the first year. These were: Liberal Arts (two programs: one for Humanities and Social Sciences, another for the Sciences, Pre-Dental or Pre-Medical Studies); Business (two programs: Management and Accounting); Electrical Technician and Medical Secretarial.

By April of 1961, this "Tentative Information Bulletin" was printed in attractive small booklet form by a state printing office (at a cost of 20 cents per copy!) and doubtless contributed to a better, more official image. The new version was able to list the membership of the newly appointed Regional Advisory Board. The program offerings remained the same. In addition to providing clear and upbeat information on the new school, this first real catalog had the interesting feature of proverb-like captions at the bottom of most of its pages. Among them:

This college seeks to become an educational and industrial development center for this region of the Commonwealth.

The college will give serious attention to young people whose potential may exist but not be fully demonstrated.

The best choice of the present is only the preliminary to

other choices yet to come. Dedication to a high purpose is the beginning not the end of educational achievement.

In the write-up and particularly in these captions, something of the earnest idealism of both the institution and its director were apparent. There was also the promise of future curriculum growth. But for 1961, the offerings were already ambitious; they formed a base for the later development of a truly comprehensive program. And, for the time being, they were sufficient to begin attracting applicants for admission. Entrance requirements were spelled out in the Tentative Information Bulletin and in the first catalog, and were described in articles in many of the area newspapers during the winter and spring of 1961.

Although Mr. Bentley received a number of inquiries and applications from prospective students during his first three months on the job, it was not until the beginning of February, 1961, that formal applications were accepted. The invitation for students to apply was not made by the college itself, but in a series of newspaper announcements released by state representatives throughout the whole region. A typical release appeared in the *Lawrence Eagle Tribune* on February 1:

### **Students May Register For New College**

Representative John J. Cronin has announced that students from the Lawrence area may now apply for admission to the state Regional Community College in Haverhill for the fall semester.

In making the announcement, Representative Cronin along with Representatives John C. Bresnahan, Lawrence P. Smith and William J. Casey, said the Northern Essex Community College is located on Chadwick Street, in the down river city. Similar notices from state representatives appeared in the *Boston Globe* (Jan.29), the *Reading Chronicle* (Feb. 2), the *North Reading Transcript* (Feb. 2), the *Chelmsford News-Weekly* (Feb. 2), the *Lowell Sun* (Feb.5), and the *Haverhill Gazette* (Feb. 13). This strategy reflected Mr. Bentley's awareness of both the need for public endorsement and of the long-term dependence which the college would have on the state legislature. It was a shrewd device for consciousness-raising among the area legislators. Several of the newspapers carrying these announcements also ran editorials encouraging residents to apply.

The strategy worked. On February 6, Mr. Bentley had a phone call from a Haverhill High senior, William Klueber Jr., asking if he could come in to discuss admission to the Business program. The phone message notes "He is home from school today because of the storm." He became a member and leader of the first class, was later hired by the college to work in its business office and as bookstore manager, before accepting a position in the auditor's office of the City of Haverhill, which he later headed. In addition to such phone inquiries, a trickle and then a steady stream of written requests began to arrive. These were all answered by Mr. Bentley himself. His standard letter of response and the application blank each illustrates the warm paternalism of the "Admissions Committee" - which, of course, was also Harold Bentley. This exciting part of his activity now began to quicken in pace. On Saturday morning, April 8, Mr. Bentley met with the

first six applicants for their admissions interview. By June 6, one hundred and sixty-eight people had applied and forty-nine had been accepted. By June 29, more than two hundred had applied. Lists of students accepted began to appear in the local newspapers. By August 5 the number accepted stood at 144, only six short of the target enrollment of 150. Still, the applications kept coming in. By August 16, the totals were 220 applicants and 165 enrolled; by August 22 the applications exceeded 300 and the admission valve had to be closed. When classes began September 25, 181 students were on hand. The recruiting talks, program planning, publicity, and admissions process had all come together to good effect.

Another aspect of the preparatory year was planning for a college library. Here the MBRCC had already done part of the job. In order to make sure that its first four colleges would have adequate beginning libraries, the Board had arranged in the early autumn of 1960 for the purchase of \$25,000 worth of books for each of the colleges. The selection of titles was made by a consultant from Simmons College. Thus, almost before it had anything else, NECC had a good supply of books and standard periodicals. When Mr. Bentley spoke to the Haverhill League of Women Voters on November 30, 1960, he could report that the books were already purchased. The Greenleaf School renovation project included making an appropriate library space by dividing off part of the second-floor auditorium. Some excellent wooden bookcases and library tables were made up in the carpentry shop of Walpole state prison (perhaps in keeping with the earlier use of the Greenleaf School building as the Bradford town jail?) and were delivered shortly after classes opened in 1961. The college's third employee, Mrs. Sally Johansen, was a "Library Assistant" as well as secretary. Together with Urita Bentley, who was a Librarian but unable to be hired full-time because of being the Director's wife, Mrs. Johansen organized the library operation for the first year. Since there was no full-time professional librarian on the staff until September, 1962, this was another of the many hats to which Mr. Bentley referred.

As Director, Mr. Bentley was charged with the task of preparing a budget request to cover the operational costs of the college. Some items, such as furniture and the cost of the renovation project were paid for by the MBRCC. The original budget request for Fiscal Year 1962 (July 1, 1961-June 30, 1962) which he submitted was for \$97,335. On February 13, 1961, state Representative Edward S. Morrow of Haverhill reported that the MBRCC had reduced this request to \$88,500 before presenting it to the House Ways and Means Committee. On the following day, the *Haverhill Gazette* reported that this budget was "the lowest budget request of four community colleges throughout the state" and that, if approved, it would represent a state expenditure of \$664 per student for each of the projected 150 students at NECC. Thus began a college tradition of "doing the most with the least," a tradition of fiscal efficiency which was to penalize the new college for many years to come. Since an additional 31 students were accepted and only an additional \$3,800 added by the legislature in May (for the specific purpose of hiring a second janitor-custodian for the college building), the net budget became \$92,300 for 181 students, a per student cost of \$599. How was it possible to educate so many students so inexpensively? With \$78,000 of his budget committed to the 01 (staff payroll)

account, Mr. Bentley was left with less than \$15,000 to spend for all other purposes over an entire year!

The key strategies he found to deal with this challenge were maximizing the personnel budget by the use of part-time faculty and intense and imaginative economizing in all other areas. For supplies, furnishings, and equipment, the college looked to government surplus centers or other inexpensive sources. Frugality was an early and long-lasting virtue to be sought after and practiced daily.

Staffing for the first year was a case in point. By spring of 1961, Mr. Bentley had decided on his own human resource needs for the opening year. Besides himself, there would be two full-time secretaries and two janitor-custodians. What about faculty?

Among the materials which had been collected the previous summer by the Chamber of Commerce Educational Needs Committee, Mr. Bentley received the folder of approximately thirty expressions of interest in teaching at the college which had been solicited and used as evidence that this would be a viable place for a community college. His phone log for the first year shows that other persons called to inquire about teaching positions. By the spring of 1961, he was ready to begin lining up the instructional team. Here he had a completely free hand.

Fortunately, in 1961 the state legislature accomplished its work early, by the end of May. Many times in subsequent years the college, along with other state agencies, would not definitely know what its budget would be for days, weeks, or even months after a new fiscal year had begun each July 1. But, while it was small, the NECC budget for Fiscal Year 1962 was definite. The Director could commit \$78,000 to payroll.

The first announcement of the hiring of full-time faculty was made on June 3, 1961. The appointments were to Nicholas Sarris (Business Administration and Accounting), Roland C. Kimball (English), Thomas A. Malloy (Social Science and Dean of Faculty and Curriculum Development) and John L. Finneran (Biology and Chemistry).

The remainder of the teaching staff was made up of part-time faculty. This was an economy measure since each full-time teaching position could be broken up into "eighteenths." For 6/18 of the salary of a full-time instructor, Mr. Bentley was able to hire people to teach two courses, i.e. one half of a full-time load. The effect was to get 50% of added instruction at no additional cost; it stretched the small payroll budget out so that all the courses and programs could be staffed. For the most part, these first faculty members were teachers in local high schools or engineers in local industry. They continued their regular full-time employment and came in mid-afternoon or early evening to conduct the college courses. Philosophically, Mr. Bentley was not enthused about such an arrangement, but he had to live with it. Later, he would request and get authorization for new instructional positions which would be of a full-time nature. The part-time faculty hired for September 1961 included: Virginia Bascom (Mathematics), William F. Gallagher (Electrical Engineering), Charles Kennedy (Graphics), Ada Mandell (English), John Medaglia (French and Spanish), George Pentico (Physics), Olga Williams (Secretarial Science), and Clarence A. Wood (Psychology and Speech).

Although most of these teachers were to leave the college within

its first three years, two of them, Olga Williams and Clarence Wood were soon converted to full-time status and each was to play a long and major role in the life and work of the institution. All of the faculty, both full- and part-time, were selected by Mr. Bentley and their appointments approved by the MBRCC. In several instances, individuals applied as counselors. One applied for a position as "Dean of Girls." But for the first year, guidance and counseling were supplied by the Director and the teaching staff; there were no student services positions. The priority was on launching the academic program and that is where the limited resources were directed. When asked in early July about what the requirements were for teachers, Mr. Bentley said they should have a master's degree in their field and either 30 credits toward a doctorate or long teaching experience. He sought to build the strongest possible faculty. That, too, became a constant in the evolution of the college.



Mr. Bentley also tried from the outset not simply to recruit the best available individual teachers, but also to encourage them to work as a team with a holistic sense of commitment to the special nature and mission of the community college and with a lively interest in incorporating the very latest of educational theory and practice. Even before a single class had met, there was a professional development program at Northern Essex. On August 30, 1961, the Northern Essex staff took part in a General Educational Workshop held at the Nashoba Regional High School.

There were three other highlights of the year of preparation: the establishment of the college's local advisory board, the development of the first scholarships, and the beginnings of the search for federal funding for specific college purposes.

The enabling legislation for the Massachusetts community colleges had provided that in addition to the system wide governing board, the MBRCC, each college established would also have a gubernatorial-appointed ten-member advisory board made up of citizens of the local area. Since he was about to leave office, Governor Foster Furcolo wanted to be sure

that sympathetic advisors would be in place for the three new colleges he had approved for 1961. Thus on January 31, 1961, came the announcement of the appointees of the first Regional Advisory Board (RAB) for Northern Essex. Representation on this board was indeed regional. In addition to three Haverhill residents, it included members from Lawrence (two), North Andover, Andover, Swampscott, Lowell and Newburyport. To insure continuity, two of these appointments were for one year, two for two, two for three, two for four, and two for five years. Many of these advisors were to be reappointed several times; Angelo Zappala, owner of the Tripoli Bakery in Lawrence, enjoyed his role on the board so thoroughly that, whenever his term was about to expire, he would go to Boston to see the governor personally to request reappointment. He thus holds the longest service on this board, having stayed on it for eighteen years, until 1979, just two years before it was replaced by the current local-citizen Board of Trustees.

In any case, Harold Bentley had the early benefit of the interest, support and advice of these prominent civic-minded persons. He convened the first meeting of the RAB on March 16, 1961. Seven of the members were present for this "get acquainted" session at which Thomas Garvey, head of the Haverhill Trade School, was chosen as temporary chairman. The discussion covered the proposed curriculum, the renovation project and the selection of faculty and students. The meeting was held in the school committee room of the Haverhill public school system administration building at 87 Winter Street, where Mr. Bentley had his temporary office. This scenario prompted the board to ask why the Greenleaf renovation project was not underway and also to suggest to the Director that he should move into the Greenleaf school "as quickly as possible." In so doing, the advisory board signaled at the outset one of the functions it was to exercise in subsequent years that of being a gadfly for the college's progress. Also from the outset a marvelous interpersonal rapport was established between the Director and this "fine group of people whose interest and ability is tops," as Mr. Bentley commented the next day, adding that the session had given him a "tremendous sense of encouragement."

The second meeting was just three months later, on June 20, and it was held in the "temporary office" at Chadwick Street. This three-hour evening meeting began with a tour of the still untouched facility. The group registered its concern that the work had not yet begun and was assured by Mr. Bentley that the construction bids called for completion of the project in time for the start of classes in September. He also reported on a cutback in teaching positions, forcing heavier use of part-time faculty. In view of this, the advisory board urged him to admit fewer students, perhaps as few as 110 instead of the quota of 150. This advice he chose not to follow, preferring to accept as many as possible, even with reduced staffing. It was the start of another institutional strategy of long duration, to register as many as possible in hopes that the proven student demand would bring future budgetary relief from the state legislature, even though it might place great pressure on the staff in the short run. The advisory board, after all, was only advisory. Yet its first meetings had established it as a strong friend and support system for the college.

Another very gratifying development of the planning year was the

contribution of scholarship funds from the community. A total of \$2,500 of *unsolicited* scholarship money was donated. On February 24, 1961, the Ornstein Shoe Company of Haverhill announced that it would offer four full-tuition (\$200) scholarships to NECC to graduates of Haverhill High School, Saint James High School, or Haverhill Trade School. Other groups also moved quickly to set up NECC scholarships: Billerica High School, the Amesbury Classroom Teachers Association, the John Drossos Foundation, and the Haverhill Bar Association. Nonetheless, the low tuition cost was the main benefit. In the admissions interviews and later at the "Director's Hour" and other assemblies, the students of the new school were reminded by Mr. Bentley that each of them was "on scholarship," since their tuition represented only about one-third of the cost of their education. It would remain a long-term challenge for the college to try to stimulate scholarship giving.

A much larger kind of funding beyond the annual state appropriation also emerged as an early need. It was noted in regard to the cost factors of a nursing program and would be critical in planning for a permanent campus: federal funding. In time, the federal government would become a major source of NECC support. But this was 1961, when the traditional concept of education as the responsibility and burden of state and local agencies still prevailed. The community college was rapidly becoming a national phenomenon and the national philosophy of education had to be reshaped. Up to this time, community colleges

were not included as possible recipients of federal funding under the National Defense Education Act. So, on April 11, 1961, the junior senator from Massachusetts, Benjamin A. Smith, introduced legislation in Congress to "end the ... discrimination against community colleges." With that legislation, another door opened. At the same time, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts was moving toward adoption of a state sales tax to increase revenues and provide wider governmental service. Thus, the challenges before the institution were immense, but opportunity for it was also on the horizon. For the 181 students who came to the Greenleaf School on September 25, 1961, there was also the thrill of discovery.



## Chapter 3

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### Early Governance, Organization and Staff

A December 1982 organizational chart of Northern Essex Community College required 13 very full pages of *reduced type* to portray all of the offices and employees of the institution. The college, with its many missions, had become a highly complex mechanism, governed, organized and staffed much like a large corporation. By contrast, until 1969, NECC did not even *have* a table of organization; the first one was developed during the course of the first institutional self-study. Yet the college had some organization staffing from the outset. Informality was the mode from 1960 through 1968. This chapter will look at the highlights of roughly the first decade in these three areas. The common thread to all three was a sense of experimentation, growth, and development. Each succeeding year found the student body and the faculty expanding. The sixties were years of growing pains, of brief moments of elation, and long periods of frustration at its own slow evolution. And they were very personal years, an era of first names and of a strong sense of being a kind of educational family. They were years of cramped space and shared equipment; there was only one office - simply called "*the office*." The need to work in such an environment could have produced irritations and turmoil. In practice, it worked out more like a microcosm of Japan; proximity and crowding produced a spirit of good humor and harmony.

When one first looks at the position of the chief executive of a Massachusetts community college in the early sixties, there are some surprises. The position was essentially monarchical; the head of each new college enjoyed full authority to administer the local campus. In doing so, he or (much later) she had only to conform to the directions and standing policies of the governing board. This basic pattern was to endure throughout the system for almost twenty years.

The general atmosphere created by the MBRCC and its Executive Directors may have been permissive, but in many specific ways it was also



highly directive. Much of the early governance of NECC was done from outside, from "the central office." This has already been noted in areas such as the purchase of library materials and the arrangements for physical plant renovation. Yet it was much more extensive.

Northern Essex, for example, has in its archives a notebook of directives, memoranda, and correspondence from the MBRCC to the college, covering the period August 1, 1960 - August 13, 1962. These communications from Executive Directors Walter M. Taylor and Donald W. Cadigan reveal the board-college relationship very clearly. System wide policies are laid down for the (then) four colleges to follow in such areas as: gifts, personnel actions, part-time faculty, Greek letter societies, deficiency funds, relationships with the University of Massachusetts, transfers between subsidiary accounts, vending machines, Good Friday devotions, chest x-rays, language laboratories, even "gummed stickers." There is almost a directive a day, some days three or four. And the tone is always "let's all do it right, let's all do it the same way, let's all avoid the displeasure or censure of other state agencies, let's get this system off to a good start by working with the larger system of state government." In many of these directives, there is also a tone of camaraderie and equality, of pioneer humor which later generations of official memo-writers would lose in time. One can get a vivid sense of the nature and extent of the control which the MBRCC exercised over NECC even from a small sample of the directives. The intent of the governing board was always quickly and clearly explained by Mr. Bentley to the college staff, along with his own resolve to carry out board policy in both letter and spirit. Many of the memos dealt with budgetary matters. One, dated March 30, 1962, informed the Directors of a number of practices mandated by the state administration and concluded:

...Final blow: it is expected that we will maintain a 20:1 student-faculty ratio,

...Only good rumor: we are to get some relief in the addition of a librarian and an administrative assistant to our tables of organization.

...It remains to be seen how much of this is true! But there is no doubt of it we are in a serious budget squeeze.

To some extent, then, the MBRCC itself was governed by the wishes and regulations of the executive and legislative branches of state government and it, in turn, relayed these mandates to the colleges to be carried out. Above the monarchy, there was the empire.

But the monarch could at least protest - and Harold Bentley was not afraid to do so when a matter of principle came up. He reminded the Board of its need to discuss policy with the Presidents' Council. His action also became a kind of internal political philosophy which led the faculty and staff of Northern Essex to feel that they too could freely speak their views and that some forum of discussion for institutional policy was desirable. The attitude of the President toward the governing board thus helped pave the way for a later internal governance system built upon the concepts of participation and consensus rather than executive fiat. The main direction for NECC-MBRCC relationships was established early: the college would follow mandated policies but it also would speak out when

important issues were concerned.

The MBRCC did come to consult with the Presidents. Other system wide councils (of academic deans, deans of administration, of students, of continuing education, and a special council of librarians) also emerged, held regular meetings and provided policy recommendations to be considered by the Presidents' Council and ultimately by the MBRCC. All of the MBRCC regulations and directives were collected and codified into a system wide Policy Handbook, a copy of which is also in the college archives. Student and faculty input into the MBRCC governing process also developed in the seventies and is discussed later.

Another extrinsic participant in the governance of Northern Essex was its Regional Advisory Board. In December of 1960, the MBRCC, anticipating the imminent appointment of advisory boards, had given this definition of the RAB's duties:

In general, the Advisory Board is urged to become informed on the offerings of the College and to assist in creating within the community an interest in and understanding of the College, its objectives, and problems. It is further expected that members will advise the President of the College on matters pertaining to the welfare of the community.

The key word here was clearly "advise"; the RAB, unlike the later Board of Trustees which supplanted it in 1981, was not a "governing" board. Yet it was being invited to offer advice on any "matters pertaining to the welfare of the College and community." And that is precisely what it did. The Northern Essex RAB, from the very outset, played a dynamic and constructive advisory role. This was especially important in the first year and one half when Mr. Bentley was the only professional administrator at the college. But even after the division of labor and the appointment of the various deans, the RAB kept up its interest in "how is the school being run?" and frequently asked that very question at its quarterly meetings.

Over the years, the Northern Essex Regional Advisory Board participated indirectly but very effectively in the governance of the college by serving both as a "think tank" and as a non-menacing type of review board to whom the President could report in a comfortable atmosphere on the current plans, problems and progress of the institution. Among the issues it considered and helped with were transfer philosophy, physical education courses, choice of a site for the permanent campus, computer installations, student unrest, furnishings and equipment, the presidential screening committee, annual commencements, educational philosophy, the admission of out-of-state students, efforts to provide day-care facilities and a Fine Arts Building, and lobbying for state support during numerous financial crises.

The connection between the RAB and the governance of the institution changed over time as the college developed more formal internal structures such as the Academic Council. This advisory group, created in April, 1970, brought students, faculty, and staff very heavily into the policy-making process and afforded the college president constant advice and recommendations in many areas where he might previously have relied on the RAB. Through its effective standing committees on Curriculum, Fac-

ulty Status, Student Academic Affairs, Budget, and Professional Development, it came to operate as a quasi-legislature within the college. The monarchy became, so to speak, constitutional and the Academic Council a real partner in the work of the institution. An example of the new relationships created by the emergence of the Academic Council came in 1974 when the founding president announced his plans for retirement. The Academic Council passed a resolution, addressed to the MBRCC, that Mr. Bentley, upon retirement, should be granted the title of "President Emeritus." The MBRCC then forwarded this resolution to the RAB for its opinion and, at its meeting of December 11, 1974, the RAB endorsed the resolution, which was subsequently approved by the governing board. In effect, the initiative had shifted, but the recognition of the importance of the advisory board was reaffirmed.



*Student Jack Wysong, Representative Albert Zabriskie, Director Harold Bentley, and Henry DiBurro, Student Council President.*

With regard to organization, the first decade in the life of NECC was essentially informal. Structures were either non-existent, embryonic, or, at most, skeletal. Everyone - faculty, students and staff-at first reported directly to the President. As late as 1969, with a faculty of eighty-eight and over 1600 students in the day division, the college had only eleven administrators! Both the student body and the faculty expanded much more rapidly and evenly than the administrative staff. It took time for the MBRCC and the legislature to authorize administrative positions and it took time for the president to relinquish direct supervision and to begin to delegate responsibilities within the college.

The academic area did have a “Dean of Faculty and Curriculum Development,” Dr. Thomas A. Malloy, as early as September, 1961. But this first NECC dean had a fifteen-hour teaching load during 1961-62 (when the average full-time faculty load was 14.751) and therefore little real opportunity for other functions. In any case, he relinquished the position as dean at the end of the first year and stayed on in a strictly teaching capacity until 1964. During 1962-63, Dr. Clarence Wood became the academic coordinator, with the title of Dean of Students, although he also worked on curriculum and faculty matters. By July 1964, Dr. Wood, who established many college academic traditions including the formats for Honors Conviviums and Commencement Exercises, was designated as Dean of Faculty and a newcomer with expertise in counseling and student concerns, Dr. Donald Ruhl, became Dean of Students. Thus, there were interludes when one person was really responsible for all aspects of student life and also for academic affairs although his job title suggested only part of that responsibility. The student population was growing, however, and specialization became more necessary with each passing year. In the system statewide, by the mid-sixties, a common pattern of organization was evolving whereby each community college president was assisted by three deans - one for academic affairs, one for student services and one for administration.

Perhaps one reason for this rather slow and somewhat uneven development of college structure was a basic stability of curriculum and student population during the first five years. The physical plant and the budget simply did not allow for dramatic rapid expansion which would have accelerated major structural change. Many administrators, including the President, continued to teach courses regularly. Functions were often shared and frequently rotated among the early leaders; a kind of musical chairs process occurred. For example, during his first seven years at the college (1962-69) the 1980s Dean of Student Affairs, Norman Landry, served as, Teacher of Mathematics, Chairman of the Department of Mathematics, Director of Student Activities, Director of Continuing Education and Community Services, and Assistant to the President.

From the outset, the main business of the college was teaching. How was the faculty organized? Here, too, the answer must be tentative, as was the situation. In a general way, one could say it was *not* organized until the first self-study process in 1969. That is, individuals applied for a teaching position, were interviewed and hired by the President and most of the time reported to him directly. In some subject areas, “departments” emerged within the first few years under the semi-official leadership of senior full-time faculty members such as Roland Kimball (English), Nicholas Sarris (Business Administration) and Norman Landry (Mathematics). Other areas, with fewer faculty, or no full-time faculty, (e.g., Natural Sciences, Foreign Languages, Electronics, Secretarial Science, Social Sciences) were not departmentalized in any official way, although individuals from these areas did assume responsibilities for course planning and scheduling, materials and equipment ordering, and other nitty-gritty. This unevenness prompted Dean Edward J. Owen, appointed Dean of Faculty in 1966 to propose an interesting set of recommendations in February of 1967. Almost as significant as the content of Dean Owen’s recommendations are the two marginal comments added by President Bentley. At the top, we notice the

notation, “Hold for later discussion” and at the end of item 12, the notation “How?” The later discussion did take place and bore fruit after the appointment of Don Ruhl as “Dean of the College” (a very meaningful title change) in July 1968. As of the fall of 1969, NECC did adopt academic divisions, as Dean Owen had proposed. But it also retained departments. In fact, many previously unorganized areas became departments or components of departments in the basic restructuring of the college which was prompted by and accompanied by the first self-study for institutional accreditation. Here, as in many other areas of the college, the written criteria of the regional accrediting agency, then called the New England Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, served as a strong catalyst for change. The interest and expertise of Dean Ruhl in creating a workable academic structure also played a major role in these changes.

The second of Mr. Bentley’s notations asked how it might be possible to arrange for a special stipend to be paid to “Coordinators.” This basic question, applied to Division Chairpersons, Department Chairpersons, and program coordinators, was to remain unsolved for many years. Only in the last decade has it been possible, through per diem payrolls, course reductions and special stipends, to provide systematic compensation to personnel in these positions, both in the Day Division and (more recently) in the Division of Continuing Education and Community Services. It is another illustration that the effective organization of NECC was at least delayed by complicating factors of the state bureaucracy. It was not always possible to run the college as one would run a business, i.e., with specific incentives for extra effort.

However slow the organization of the faculty may appear, other areas of the college were even more tentative, as is seen from a sampling of the dates when specific offices were created in the student services area.

- Student Activities Office: 1965, under Norman Landry
- Counseling Office: 1966, under Charles “Church” Stafford
- Registrar’s Office: September, 1967, under Donald Charlesworth
- Admissions Office: 1968, under Cecilia Furlotte
- Placement Office: 1968, under Richard LeClair
- Financial Aid Office: 1969, under Susan Horowitz
- Computer Center: 1970, under Dwight Killam
- Health Services Office: 1973, under Jane Shaw.

In terms of organization, the college truly went through an evolutionary process. One benchmark of this evolution was getting the organization and procedures into written form. This breakthrough came during academic year 1968-69 with the Dean of the College, Don Ruhl, as its driving force. His office (in particular, the 1967 NECC Secretarial Science graduate, Cindy Hideriotis) compiled and distributed for the first time a large Northern Essex Community College *Organization and Information Guide*, complete with objectives, organization charts, specific job descriptions, committee listings, personnel privileges, rules and procedures, academic information, advising and counseling systems, library operation, community service, continuing education, a calendar, and an in-house directory.

The inclusion of the "Division of Continuing Education" in this guide is noteworthy; long before others used the idea or the phrase "the one-college concept," NECC was operating on that basis. This very useful manual was updated each succeeding year into the early eighties and distributed to new employees as they joined the staff. The very compiling of this manual caused much discussion and change in the setup and policies of the college and the successive editions of this guide constitute their own illustration of the growth and development of NECC - at least on paper.

Along with governance and organization, a third major component of the young college was its staff, a small group of secretaries and maintenance personnel - often unmentioned in this type of history, and also often (and certainly so in the case of NECC) among the most important contributors to its life, work, and atmosphere.

In his first "Director's Report" to the MBRCC, Harold Bentley, in June of 1962, alluded both to staff strengths and to the problem of understaffing:

#### OFFICE STAFF

The choice of the two women for the office staff indicates how fortunate one can be based on quite limited anticipations of what the positions can require. Both the bookkeeper and the secretary are conscientious, thorough in their work, and willing to do more than go by the clock. They handle the many callers on the phone or personally with graciousness and tact. Both are extremely valuable to the school. They are now working to the limit of their capacity. The director is concerned that the increased load of the coming year will create many problems unless some help is available.

The "staff" at that time consisted of Miss Phyllis Comeau and Mrs. Frederick ("Sally") Johansen, the "bookkeeper" and "the secretary." For these two gracious and highly competent women, NECC was much more than just a job and, Mr. Bentley pointed out, they did much more than "go by the clock." Miss Comeau continued in the business office until grave illness caused her retirement in October, 1977. Mrs. Johansen ("Mrs. Jo") worked in the Director's office, then for several years in the library and then for several years as secretary to the Department of Nursing before becoming, in 1971, the first college employee to retire. A short summary of some of her activities at NECC brings out both the "family" mood of the early days and also the kinds of contributions which the staff made. She has shared her good-natured and humorous reminiscences, which are recorded in the college archives on tape cassette.

"Mrs. Jo" was the secretary; the mother of two NECC students (her daughters Jane, 1st class, and Ingrid, 2nd class), the friend, confidant and volunteer counselor for many students prior to the arrival of professional counselors; the assistant librarian; and the first secretary to work exclusively with one academic department (Nursing). Students sought her out on personal problems, academic concerns, housing, and car-pooling. It was known that any student who was in a financial bind could get a small confidential loan from "Mrs. Jo," whose starting salary was all of \$70 per week! She gave the college newspaper its name, "The Observer." Evenings,

her home became, for several years, a study and social club for NECC students, since the college library was not open nights. Friendships (often across ethnic and religious lines) were sparked and frequently led to close and long-term bonds. Until her death in 1985, "Mrs. Jo" remained in touch with many alumni of the early years, people whose lives were influenced not only by her official job functions but perhaps even more so by the warm outreach she made; it was a case of mutual enrichment.

The maintenance staff of NECC was also small and poorly paid, but it, too, contributed immensely to the sense of community at the new college. The early issues of the LUMEN (the college yearbook, which appeared annually from 1963 through 1974) always included photographs of "Sully" (Joseph Sullivan), Joe Devito, Carmen Grillo and Ed Fice, the first members of the "Fireman-Janitor" corps. There was so much sheer physical work to be done that in the first year of operation, when the office staff was at two, the maintenance staff was at parity. With some student help, Joe DeVito and Joe Sullivan had to receive, unpack, and put in place all of the supplies and equipment; to finish uncompleted parts of the renovation project; to help regulate student parking; to operate the heating system; and, of course, to clean and maintain the college building and grounds. Until 1967, there were no more than four of them to do all this. Like the clerical staff, they also had to find time to relate to faculty and especially to students in supportive ways. That they succeeded in doing so is evident from the amount of student volunteer work which was given not just in making a student lounge in the basement, but also in setting up a flagpole and sprucing up the grounds outside on "Cleanup Day." They generated a sense of pride and school spirit.



After the first couple of years, the expanding student body had so overcrowded the Greenleaf School that the college had to look for more classroom space. It found it first in other Bradford buildings: the Grange Hall, the First Church of Christ, and the People's Methodist Church, all within walking distance. The addition of this extra classroom space en-

tailed new challenges for the maintenance crew; they now had four buildings to look after instead of just one. After 1966, the college “crossed over the bridge” and began to use space on the Haverhill side of the river, mainly at the former Haverhill High School (later renovated and converted into the municipal City Hall) and at the Hellenic Center connected with the Greek Orthodox Church on Winter Street.

With the start of the seventh class, in 1967, a major part of the NECC operation was moved to the “Uptown Campus” of the former Haverhill High School. That site was to be the principal college site until occupation of the new campus in 1971. The move entailed so much that during the summer of 1967, four new employees were added to the maintenance staff: Ray O’Connell, Myron “Mike” Follansbee, Bob Calway and Bob Spofford. As with the clerical staff, there has been a trend for long, loyal service. Given the challenges of their tasks, the notion of “more than a job” certainly applies here as well. In the sixties, the college owned no vehicles. It was constantly necessary to move many pieces of furniture and equipment around the campus of what Mr. Bentley liked to call “the only college in America with a major river running right through the middle of it.” To accomplish these crucial logistic feats, Ray O’Connell used the trunk of his own car! In 1971, when the challenge was to move the whole college from Bradford and downtown out to the Lake Kenoza campus, Ray and Mike did the job using their own camper-trailers to haul everything!

To sum up, whether one looks at governance, organization, or staff at NECC in its early years, one finds several remarkable characteristics emerging as part of the institutional profile: a sense of freedom and experimentation, a constant flux, a mood of frugality, an evolution of structure, and, most important of all, a feeling of sharing in the attempt to do gigantic tasks even without adequate numbers or resources.



## Chapter 4

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### Early Student Life

During most of Northern Essex' first decade, the students were predominantly young (eighteen and nineteen year-old high school graduates), male, and interested in transfer programs. By 1984, the student body was predominantly older (the average age was twenty-seven), female (63%), and enrolled in occupational programs. There are many contrasts, yet some things remain essentially the same. For Northern Essex students, there were at least three constants. In the eighties, as in 1961, each student had the challenge of academic coursework, the opportunity for extracurricular activities, and the discovery of daily experience in his or her personal life.

In that sense, this history is really more than ten thousand separate, individual, and highly personal stories. But "student life" on a given campus is far from an abstraction. The students both create and are themselves influenced by the special kind of life which develops there. The current chapter recalls and illustrates what student life, particularly as expressed in student activities, was like from the beginning until the early seventies, when it became enhanced by the previously only dreamed-of possibilities of the new campus and the College Center. There are some references both to academic life and to personal experiences, but the main focus is on activities. The source material is very extensive: administrative records; old copies of the student newspaper; yearbooks; literary journals; and other student publications (sometimes from "the underground"); records of the student government; local press clippings; photographs from early "field days" and sports events; reminiscences found in the college collection of audio and videotapes; materials donated by the alumni themselves. There is more than enough for a complete separate work on just the student body. Here only the highlights can be suggested.

## The Academic Experience

For all of the 142 “boys” and 39 “girls” who entered NECC in September, 1961, and for all the thousands who followed later, the essential thing was their decision to “get” higher education, to follow an academic program. The college, for its part, has always emphasized this element. Most of the students, then as now, received encouragement and support at home in that decision. Here for the first time in this region, high school graduates could go, at low cost, to a college “in their back yard.” NECC students had a thirst for education and a determination to secure it, even if it sometimes meant doing it all on their own, getting the necessary money, car, ride, or apartment to make it possible. In the first years, there were no federal or state financial aid programs, not even “work-study.” For the eight students who got part-time jobs at the college bookstore or library in the first year, the pay was one dollar per hour!

The governing board, the MBRCC, had made a clear choice to locate the community colleges only in those localities willing to provide a specific facility on an all-day basis. This very important decision gave the NECC students two things: their own place (and sense of place), the Greenleaf School, and also an academic program set up for the morning and early afternoon hours-enabling them to get the jobs which so often were economically critical if they were to be able to afford their college education.

Of the first class, 180 were Massachusetts residents; only one student came from out of state; only two were veterans; none was a foreign student. More than in any later year, it was a *Massachusetts* community college. During the course of the first semester, twelve students withdrew and nineteen were dropped for inadequate grades. They discovered early that the academic program was in earnest and that the “open door” of admissions could and would become a “closed door” if academic standards were not met. This also alerted the faculty and staff right at the start of the need to closely monitor the retention rate and to develop strategies to keep the “open door” from becoming a “revolving door.”



Once admitted, the students were given extensive orientation programs where the college aims, policies, and expectations were explained. At first these programs were slightly stylized and rather formal. In September, 1962, for example, a whole week was devoted to orientation and registration. It included a "Faculty Tea" get-together as a format for students to meet their teachers over silver service. This genteel approach, perhaps akin to gatherings at the nearby Bradford Junior College, was soon to be replaced by orientations which concluded with a "Field Day," outdoor conclaves where shirtsleeves, hot dogs, guitar music, and volleyball games became the background for the first encounters with the faculty.

The 1962 letter of welcome refers to "Freshman Registration" and to "Senior Registration." This set a precedent concerning what to call those students who had completed the first year. Were they "Seniors" or were they "Sophomores?" To some educational purists, the latter was the appropriate description for people in their second year of college. But "Seniors" was the choice, and it stuck. This reinforced not only the self-image of the "Seniors," but also the notion that the two-year community college program was a complete educational package, independent of four-year baccalaureate programs. It culminated in an Associate's Degree and, thus, those who were in their final year were the "Seniors," even if they were about to transfer and become "Juniors" somewhere else.

The academic calendar in the sixties was traditional and long. Classes began soon after Labor Day and the first semester included a two-week break over the Christmas and New Year's holidays. Classes would then resume for two weeks and be followed by a one-week period of three-hour final examinations, required in each course. Thus, the second semester would get underway only in the second week of February and final exams for the spring semester would run well into early June. Grades were sent out not only at the end of a term, but also at mid-semester. "Mid-term" exams were standard and mid-term grades were assigned to identify and motivate students who needed more application or special tutoring. This "early warning" system reflected both the concern for retention and the seriousness with which academic performance was taken. The very first headline and lead story of the first issue of *The Observer* (December 14, 1961) were stark reminders:

### **WARNING ISSUED: SCHEDULES CHANGED**

Mid-semester warnings were mailed out over the Thanksgiving vacation, bringing the happy holiday to a sudden and sad end for many ... Students should be grateful that the administration is now moving to help them in every possible way ... the administration hopes to see better grades at the end of the semester.

As the headline here suggested, there was more involved than a simple warning to students in difficulty. For example, foreign language classes were reorganized into background and ability groupings and math students got the option of transferring into a special review course. Every effort was made to assist and retain the individual student.

Along with the "warnings," there developed a college tradition of en-

couraging and recognizing the many students who did well. In that era, long before the alleged grade-inflation of a later time, special ways were found to honor and reward high achievement. A Dean's List of 20 students with a QPA of 3.0 or better was published (*Observer*, Vol. 1, No. 3) at the end of the first semester. The April 1962 issue of *The Observer* included the message, "Students beware! Finals are coming." Apparently they did "beware" because the Dean's List at the end of that second semester grew to twenty-eight. It included the names of George DeHullu and Jack Wysong, both of whom would go on and then return to their alma mater as members of the faculty, and in Jack's case, the administration.

Perhaps nowhere was the centrality of study and the seriousness of the NECC student body better expressed than in an essay written by Edward Ryan as part of a final examination in European History in early June of 1963. Speaking to the question "What did you get from European History that you can carry away with you?" he wrote in part:

Today, after years of bloodshed and hard toil by our ancestors, we are able to go to a community college and receive an education. This is something that most of our parents were not fortunate enough to have. The community college is made up of a majority of students who come primarily from the same type of homes that have average working parents who want their children to have something more than they did, and this is an education which is priceless.

Another academic dimension of the first decade was the network of ties which quickly developed between the NECC students and the wider economic and social community.

Sometimes their efforts were very ambitious and took rather astonishing forms. The first person to receive an NECC diploma was Raymond H. Abbott, '63. He served as editor-in-chief of *The Observer* in its first two years. Soon after leaving Northern Essex, he joined the "Domestic Peace Corps," Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA), and began volunteer work among the Sioux in South Dakota. Each week he wrote back to faculty and student friends at NECC about his varied experiences. Entries from his journals were used in Mr. Richard Mesle's course in Introductory Sociology as examples of field research. This led to a class project including "action areas." When Raymond Abbott shared the fact that the Native Americans among whom he was working had no books, the NECC students took appropriate action. They organized a drive and collected 2,000 books which they then processed with library classification, packaged, and mailed to the Rosebud Indian Reservation! Thus NECC became almost surely the only community college in New England with a "branch library" in South Dakota. The idealism and concept of "what you can do for your country" associated with President John F. Kennedy had clearly taken root at NECC.

More often the projects were focused on the local region. But whether carried out by an individual student, a club, or a whole class, the results were often no less impressive. For example, when the writer went to the Haverhill Public Library to develop some of the research materials for this

book, he was referred to a book entitled *A Survey of Source Material for the History of Haverhill, Massachusetts*. It turned out to be a 38-page bound volume written by Richard W. Pyne, who later taught in the Social Studies Department of Haverhill High School. On the title page there is the simple signature "Richard W. Pyne - U.S. History - 2 December 1963." This was a Northern Essex term paper! In organization and writing style it approaches the finest work one might expect in a thesis for a master's or doctoral degree. Mr. Pyne, who graduated from NECC in 1964, had categorized and annotated the entire collection on local history and put it into useable bibliographical form. It is an incredible production which has benefitted both professional researchers and the general public ever since.

Other projects of the early era were carried through by groups of NECC students and drew public attention even more dramatically to the college. A prime example was the project undertaken in the winter of 1965 by students in one of the first clubs, the NECC Chapter of the American Accounting Association. Under the direction of their club advisor, Professor Nicholas Sarris, twenty students set out to explore the shopping habits of consumers in the greater Haverhill area and in so doing "to further enhance their economic and business education." The students went out, in winter weather, to 525 scientifically selected households in Haverhill and surrounding towns, including southern New Hampshire. All but twenty-five of these households participated in the survey by agreeing to an interview in which a five-page questionnaire was completed. The questionnaire, which the students had developed, covered every major aspect of the shopping habits and preferences of the consumer, from the adequacy of parking to where consumers were going for their groceries, furniture or dental care and how they felt about a (then proposed) state sales tax. These responses were all clearly tabulated and to some extent interpreted, along with 163 separate suggestions that the consumers wanted local retailers to think about. The project concluded with a lengthy analysis of the survey results and some suggestions for retail promotional activity. This entire effort took only four months. On April 30, 1965, the Greater Haverhill Chamber of Commerce received from the college a sixty-nine page report entitled *Operation Comeback: A Consumer Analysis Survey of Metropolitan Haverhill, Massachusetts*. For the students who compiled it, it was a major learning experience in the gathering and presentation of significant data. For the members of the Retail Trade Division of the Chamber, it was food for thought and action. It was also an early and impressive demonstration of how the academic work of NECC students could address and benefit the needs and concerns of the community.

## Student Activities

The first class had the slight disadvantage of being small and the great advantage of being free. There were no time-honored traditions to respect or impede. The students could do whatever seemed worth doing in their own way. Would the new college be a place of life as well as a place of learning for them?

For the first group of students some things worked against the emergence of extra-curricular programs: many of them were working, at least

part-time; coming from all over the region, they didn't know very many of their fellow students; except for the "sitting wall" out front, or for "Kelly's" (a popular pub), or the parking lot across the street, they had no place to congregate and socialize; for the young women among them (only 39 out of 181) there was the intimidation of being a tiny minority - and also the complication that the coeds from Bradford Junior College quickly began to appear to check on what was happening "down on Chadwick Street."

Within a month after the college opened, the students organized a Student Council of six members. As in the Student Government Association Constitution, the idea of proportional representation was used: there were three members from Liberal Arts, two from Business and one from



Electronic Technology on this first student government body, whose advisor was none other than Mr. Bentley. From the start, the Council had complete control over the Student Activity Fund (SAF). Early in 1963, there was a bill before the Massachusetts legislature which required the expenditure of Student Activity Fund monies to be approved by the college Director. On some campuses, this was opposed by the students, but at Northern Essex, the Student Council voted in February, 1963 to endorse the legislation, which ultimately was enacted. That

was a sign of good student-administration relationships. But not all was "sweetness and light." The students as well as the faculty, were to "catch" Mr. Bentley's spirit of independent judgement and action, especially so since he was their advisor. In its sixth and final issue of the first year, *The Observer* came out with a courageous editorial against the establishment's hopes for the Student Council in the following year:

### **WE ARE OPPOSED**

This newspaper has learned plans are in the making to continue our present Student Council at least through November of next semester and perhaps retain the president of the Student Council for the entire year. We feel such an action may possibly be contrary to the wishes of the student body and if pursued would be a serious mistake.

The students of Northern Essex are quite capable of choosing their own representatives. After a year of classes they know what people have the capabilities and leadership to serve them best.

We hope that close consideration is given this matter before such a mistake is made.

Early in the second year, a problem arose concerning the eligibility of Seniors to run for the Council. A ruling was announced that only students who had earned twenty-nine credits could compete for the five available seats (the Council had been expanded to include five Seniors and five Freshmen). *The Observer* called for a written constitution for the Council. The task was turned over to a new faculty member, social studies instructor Richard Mesle. He quickly turned it into a class project in his Government course. Work on the Constitution of the Northern Essex Community College Student Government Association went on through academic year 1962-1963 and the document was completed, ratified by the student body, accepted by the administration, and implemented in the spring of 1964. As it appeared in early issues of the college's student manual, the *Information Handbook*, this nine-page constitution was long, specific, and flexible enough to continue as a basic charter until 1984, when a new constitution was put into place. Its authenticity was signaled in the opening words of the Preamble: "We, the Students ..." Through its Social Committee and its Finance Committee, the Student Council came to control and manage most of the non-academic student life of the college. All student organizations or activities using the college name had to be approved by the Council as did the expenditure of the Student Activity Fund. Interestingly, the Constitution provided for an annual allocation of ten percent of the Fund to the college President for use at his discretion. The size of the fund grew dramatically with rising enrollments:

<u>Academic Year</u>	<u>Student Activity Fund</u>
1961-1962	\$6,554
1962-1963	\$15,834
1963-1964	\$33,213

The existence of this ten percent allocation and resultant "President's Discretionary Fund" was no problem for many years. The students were well aware that the college was inadequately funded and that the President needed a funding source for special purposes such as art exhibits, open houses, and the speakers and performers who were brought in for the "President's Hour." And although the President also had to approve the expenditure of the entire Student Activity Fund, no hassles emerged. In fact, the Student Council often allocated additional money for institutional purposes. In 1964, for example, the Council voted a gift of \$1,000 to the college for the purchase of additional library books and equipment. It was only in the 1970's-and then as a result of alleged misuse of SAF monies on other campuses-that the "Discretionary Fund" was ordered discontinued by the MBRCC. Since then, the entire fund must be expended strictly for students as opposed to institutional purposes. Such artificial distinctions would have carried little meaning to the students of 1964. They knew that their library had a miniscule operating budget of \$1,700 for the entire year

and they wanted a better library immediately; their allocation of \$1,000 almost doubled its purchasing power.

In any case, the Student Council was then on a better financial footing than the college as a whole. Unlike the tuition receipts, which until 1988 had to be turned over to the General Fund of the Commonwealth, the Student Activity monies were always retained by the college and immediately available for student use. And, despite the rapid expansion of student activities, there was always a sure and sufficient financial base. It even be-



# N. E. C. C. O.

Northern Essex Community College Observer

VOLUME 1 NO. 1

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 14, 1961

## WARNINGS ISSUED; SCHEDULES CHANGED

Mid-semester warnings were mailed out over the Thanksgiving vacation, bringing the happy holiday to a sudden and sad end for many.

The warnings were not a final grade, but merely a reminder to the student that half the semester had passed and he was not adjusting as he should. There is still time for many students to pull up their grades to a higher level.

Students should be thankful that the administration is now moving in to help them in every possible way. The areas where the greatest difficulty lies are the languages and mathematics. For the benefit of the student, the French classes will be divided into groups according to background and the ability of proper background in math course this semester. The will continue in the regular choice is entirely up to the student. With these changes in effect, the administration hopes to see better grades at the end of the semester.

### E.C.O. STUDENTS TO INVEST

The Business Department has released a tentative program of activities for Economic students. The program will include the following: joint investment by Economic students in a cooperating company; address by the president of the company explaining functions of the company, participation in the annual stockholders meeting, and a field trip (for qualified students) to the New York Stock Exchange.

### STUDENT COUNCIL ORGANIZES



Left to Right: Angelo Scala, Electronic Tech, Lawrence; Donald Hazen, Business Administration, Ipswich; Charles Ryan, Liberal Arts, Lowell; Henry DiBurro, Business Administration, Haverhill; Bernard Turner, President, Liberal Arts, Haverhill; Robert Christy, Liberal Arts, Haverhill.

On November 16, 1961 the Student Council members elected the permanent officers of the Council. Bernard Turner, was elected to the office of President; Henry DiBurro, Vice Pres.; Charles Ryan, Treasurer. Verlinda Smith was voted Student Council Member and Rose Marie D'Agata was chosen Cultural Advisor. Mr. Bentley is advisor to the Student Council.

The Council voted to have the vending machines installed in the lounge. There will be a 10% commission to the school from the vending machines. The North Shore Vending Company was awarded the contract for tonic, soup, ice cream, sandwiches, and candy.

In addition, the Council formulated plans for the recent successful Christmas dance.

### SOCIAL SEASON OPENS



On December 17, 1961, the social season of the Northern Essex Community College was officially opened at the gala Christmas Dance given to the students by the faculty. The auditorium was transformed from its usual academic appearance to one of festive merrymaking. The colorful Christmas lights and ornaments hanging from the ceiling, the gaily decorated Christmas trees, and the sled filled with Christmas gifts put everyone into the best of spirits. Music for the Christmas Dance was provided by

Tom Goodwin's Orchestra. Refreshments of Christmas cookies and punch were served in the library.

The faculty and the Student Council had complete charge of the dance committee. Mrs. Mandell was in charge of the faculty committee. Rose Marie D'Agata and Angelo Scala were in charge of the excellent job done by the decorating committee. Tickets were sold by Henry DiBurro, Donald Hazen, Charles Ryan, and Angelo Scala. Linda Smith headed the refreshment committee.



came a challenge for the Student Council to expend its entire budget in a given year, although - again unlike the main college budget - the SAF was allowed to carry any surplus over from one fiscal year to the next.

Although women students were a small minority in the early years, they took a prominent place in the Student Council and in other activities. In 1961-1962, the original Council was all male. In the fall of 1962, Judy

Ross of Beverly, Lorraine Lescizka of Haverhill, and Marilyn Sapka of Lawrence were elected. At the same time, in elections for class officers, Donna Orsini of Ipswich and Ellen Foreman of Billerica were respectively chosen (stereotypically?) as Secretary of the Senior and of the Freshman Class. When the *Boston Globe* did a feature article on NECC in April of 1964, it included a photo of the Student Council at that time; four of the eleven Student Council-



ors then were women. The ethnic and religious background of the students was diverse. In working and socializing together, the NECC student body broke down many of the fears and stereotypes of earlier generations of young people in the area. The open-door college was also succeeding in opening new windows of mutual respect and understanding; it was working not only as a product of a democratic society, but also as a proving ground for a fuller democracy.

An example of the openness of the NECC Student Council is the story of John Aung Thwin, a nineteen-year-old student from Burma who came in the fall of 1964 to live with the family of Dr. Duane Windemiller and to study at NECC. He was one of the first foreign students at the college and won immediate acceptance: he was chosen Vice-President of the Council as a freshman and as its President in 1965. NECC students were developing a global as well as a regional and a community perspective. Much of the success of the Student Council at NECC was attributable to the early emergence, high quality, and supportive effort of another student activity, the college newspaper, *The Observer*. It first appeared in December of 1961 in a four-page 9 x 12-inch glossy format, without a masthead. Its staff of twelve students was advised by Professor Roland Kimball. During the first year, it published six issues at a total cost of \$438.00. Under the leadership of Raymond Abbott, who was its editor-in-chief until his graduation in June of 1963, *The Observer* quickly established its role as the main vehicle of student feeling and opinion.

Nowhere can one get a better feel for the pulse of the growing col-

lege than in its glossy (until 1968) or (since then) opaque pages. For about the first six years, the student newspaper was rather staid and "loyalist." Then, from about 1968 to 1973, it changed to reflect the mood of student concern over war, civil rights, environmental pollution, and social injustice. It adopted radical formats and engaged in a multi-faceted criticism of the "establishment." Later, in the mid- and late-seventies, it would return to more conventional formats and a more conservative journalistic style. But it always insisted upon and enjoyed complete freedom of expression, which it earned in part by its ongoing policy of airing all sides of any question, including negative criticism of itself.

The coverage provided by *The Observer* was relatively constant. From the beginning it reported on academic items, social events, club activities, athletics, and new faculty and staff appointments. It also featured bold editorials, campus photography, and, particularly in its first years, a number of gossip and humor columns and opinion interviews on timely topics. Columns such as "Dear Zelda" (an NECC counterpart to "Dear Abby"), "Quips and Quotes," "Question of the Month," and "With Malice Toward All" insured the students of current, lively, and innocently merry reading.

Idealism, community concern, and political involvement dominated its pages in the late sixties and early seventies. This was so much the case that a number of memorable "special editions" appeared in those years. These were often influenced by the militant mood and offbeat style of the "radical" student journalism of the time. In April of 1969, for example, there was a four-day seminar involving faculty, students, and administration on the following topics: Sex in Books, Drugs, A College Press, College and Community, Underground Press, Student Council, Student Freedom and Responsibility, and Student Fees. An eight-page "Special Edition" was written and published by the Journalism Class on this "thrashing out" of student concerns. Despite provocative headlines (e.g., "Sock it to the Administration???"), the content was pretty tame and balanced. It reflected a diversity of viewpoints and illustrated the ultimate wisdom of the NECC institutional formula for dealing with those troubled times, namely to promote open-ended discussion with and among the students. The willingness both to have such dialogue and to have it freely reported served as a crucial escape valve at a time of highly charged emotion. Parts of this particular seminar went as follows:

SDS ideas should be published even if these ideas advocate using force as a means to achieve a decent end whatever it may be—that is opinion; but when this force becomes an end in itself—this is propaganda.

Another student stated that pornographic cartoons "have no place in a student newspaper."

There is no Boston paper that would dare suggest something like being friends with Cuba, but a campus paper can do it.

The paper campaigned for the college to implement a system of student

evaluation of individual faculty members. An April, 1970 issue of *The Observer* editorialized on the subject "Faculty Evaluation or-Are You Chicken Shit?" A system was quickly adopted and led to still another special issue of 1971, *The Northern Essex Annual Noose*, which reported to students on the results of the new system - which they were urged to consult in "making a more astute selection of courses and instructors." And although the publishers did preface the listings with some advice about "using with caution," the *Noose* was not favorably received by either faculty or administration. A typical entry (with the instructor's name deleted) read:

(Instructors Name)

One student responded; received an A for less than two hrs./wk. Apparently did not read text or have any opinion on class. If that doesn't tell you something...

*Advice:* Can't go wrong here, folks!

For some reason, the *Noose* only appeared once at NECC. But the concept of student evaluations, with due process for confidentiality, had been established and became an ongoing part of the institutional process.

After 1971 and the move to the Elliott Street campus, *The Observer* soon returned to less florid language and to a "straighter" appearance. Still, in drawing up the balance sheet for the student newspaper in its first ten years, it would be misleading to leave our "ball of string" with the *Noose*. A long-range observer of *The Observer* would more likely choose one of the many things it produced to promote the name and image of the college. Even in the "era of turmoil," it focused on the positive. The institutional pride and commitment reflected in *the Observer* also found expression in other student publications, the most important of which were *LUMEN* (the college yearbook), *Parnassus* (the college literary magazine), and *The Happening* (handbills of the Student Public Relations Board).

The college yearbook appeared eleven times from 1963 through 1974; in 1971, perhaps because of student preoccupation with other causes, there was insufficient interest and consequently no book. For students of that era, however, the yearbook was more than just a keepsake of their days at NECC; it was a major challenge to produce and also one of the key student activities. The set of *LUMENs* which they produced tell, in a few words and many evocative photos, what student life was really like at that time. It is a vibrant chronicle of the fun and spirit of that era. For faculty and staff who are still working at NECC, a glimpse into the old yearbooks might result in the shocked comment "How young we were!"

The *LUMEN* grew as did the college. The 1963 issue, produced by a staff of 12, was 76 pages long; the 1972 issue ran to 248 pages and had a staff of 23. But when its production ended, it was not because the task had grown too large or because the funding had faded. By then the nature of the student body had changed: it was much older and less homogeneous. The traditional sense of belonging to a particular "class" whose members all start at the same time, do things together, and all graduate together in

[illegible]

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Kraus, the staff of *Parnassus* (usually about 15 students) proved year in and year out that the spark of inspiration first kindled on a mountain of ancient Greece continued to glow here in the Merrimack Valley. For the students involved, it afforded an opportunity not just to see their works in print but also to work and learn as part of an editorial team in a climate of free creativity. For its readers, *Parnassus* has been a refreshing encounter with the imaginative insights of an always new, always changing student generation. The other major student publication, *The Happening*, was related to public relations.

As early as 1964, a group of students got together to form a "Public Relations Board." This club and its weekly newsletter were encouraged by Dean Ruhl at the outset and later by its successive advisors, Professor Gene Connolly and Public Relations Coordinator Sheila Krim. Its weekly handbill of campus events was originally known as *The Public Relations Bulletin*. The publishing of such a bulletin is a clear reflection of the growth of the student body; by 1967, it was simply too large to rely on a word-of-mouth system of informing all students of the ever-growing number and range of activities available to them. It also reflects a change in college strategy. Prior to 1966, public relations was the work of the President and the entire staff. Then, for several years, this task was given to Professor Eugene Connolly, in addition to his teaching responsibilities. Finally, by 1970, the college had appointed a full-time public relations specialist, Sheila Krim. But the tradition of student involvement lived on. The bulletin, renamed *The Happening*, continued as a student publication as late as 1979, and, like the other publications described above, played a vital and frequently "earthy" role on campus. Sometimes it was the major focus for the institution's self-image; such was its Special Edition for the open-house of May, 1969. In it, Donald Waldron wrote:

You are part of something uniquely American. Along with the Broadway musical, the community college is one of the few cultural ideas that was not imported, and like the Broadway musical it is a successful idea that is here to stay ... Northern Essex means many things, but perhaps it most strikingly means *opportunity* and *challenge*.

The whole fabric of student life in the decade of the sixties emerges as a rich tapestry in which the threads of individual experience crossed with the threads of group activity to make education more than books read, tests taken, and credits earned. The students of that time created the traditions of a college. The wearing of freshman "beanies" and the good-natured hazing of Orientation Week have been left behind - along with the "Freddie" and the "twist." What remains is a legacy of energy and participation, a spirit that education should also be fun and camaraderie: people helping one another.

# Expansion and Facilities Problems

Until the opening of the Elliott Street campus in September, 1971, NECC was a college beset with all kinds of physical problems. Facilities were small, cramped, and inadequate; they hindered development, made expansion of programs and services difficult or impossible, and made improvisation the order of the day. The institution felt a constant need to apologize, reflected in one of its slogans in the sixties, “The facilities are temporary, but the education is permanent.” Compounding the problem, the school’s equipment was scant, primitive and in chronic short supply. With its small staff and limited budget, NECC could easily have settled for mere existence. Instead, it battled imaginatively for the right to grow and for the means to become comprehensive. Throughout the entire decade of the sixties, NECC was an institution with a “can-do” spirit and a “make-do” base. In that light, its growth from a student body of 181 in 1961 to over 1,500 by the end of the era was a remarkable triumph of ingenuity and determination. In that ten year pilgrimage from the Greenleaf School to the new campus on Kenoza Lake, there are many tales to be told which explain how excellence and expansion could go along with deprivation. Perhaps the pilgrim’s progress is greatest when the pilgrim travels light. In this chapter, we recall some of the typical experiences of student, faculty, and staff along that arduous way.

## A. Facilities and the Students

From the very outset, it was the students who had to cope most strenuously with the problems. Imagine being interviewed for admission into college on the front porch of a red-brick former grammar school, as happened in the summer of 1961 for many of NECC’s first class. The pilgrimage began with an act of faith that the college would be renovated on time.

Once the pilgrim did get inside, he or she found that there was no student lounge, no typewriters for the typing class, and no equipment in the chemistry lab. So the pilgrims went into action. They created, under the brick arches of the former jail-cells of the basement, a space of their own. Someone persuaded the management of the Howard Johnson's restaurant in Andover to donate some booths and tables which it was discarding in a remodeling project. A group of students got a truck and worked all through one night from midnight to dawn moving this gift and making an "instant, no-cost-to-the-Commonwealth" cafeteria-lounge area for themselves. Later they organized a "paint-in" weekend which transformed this lounge into a kaleidoscope of energetic colors, murals, and graffiti and filled it with sound from the "hi-fi." For the library, they not only voted it funds, they made it happen physically. When they arrived, the library books were all in cases downstairs. The stack area was on the second floor, where the new birch bookcases from the carpentry shop of the state prison in Concord stood empty. So a large group of volunteers formed a "bucket brigade" on the stairway (a steep one, with at least twenty risers) and, with encouragement from Mrs. Bentley and Mrs. Johansen, passed the 4,600 books from hand to hand up to the reading room and onto the shelves. Before one could "hit the books," one had to move them. There was, of course, no "work-study" at the time; this was free labor, "study-work."



The first NECC students also found that there were no facilities whatever for sports or physical education. In the second year, they voted money from the Student Activity Fund to rent the facilities of the local YMCA three afternoons a week for intramural sports and swimming. Similar arrangements were soon made with the Crystal Springs Country Club for golfing and with Academy Lanes in Bradford for intramural bowling. In these and other ways, the very lack of facilities helped build college-community links. The students were intensely aware of the lack of many necessary items and, instead of merely griping, they pitched in with both their time and their funds. The balance sheet for 1962-63, for example, shows a total SAF disbursement of \$1,711.09 for "school equipment." This amount

represented more than ten percent of their total budget of \$15,834.79; it was also an extra tenth added to the total amount appropriated in the college's budget for equipment (\$17,317.12) by the legislature for that academic year. The pilgrims were not averse to "tithing."



Sometimes, though, there was also some "writhing." Imagine going to a class in the Grange: one sat on a metal folding chair and balanced text and notebook on a knee. But, of course, things improved on days when there was a test. Then the instructor could hand out "writing boards," pieces of brown masonite approximately 12 x 16, so that one could work in comfort! (The author has one of these relics of the "good old days" and still uses it at home, in the comfort of a large armchair with hassock, to correct the NECC homework of the nineties!) Finally, when the pilgrimage was over and the student donned cap and gown to enter into the "Promised Land" of transfer or employment, the ceremony, commencement exercises, had to be conducted in a "foreign land," in facilities loaned by Bradford Junior College, Andover High School or Lowell Technological Institute. Since the students of the sixties could only be *told* about the great plans and prospects of the future NECC, their faith and patience was especially extraordinary; even while on their two-year journey they served as missionaries. Without their enthusiasm for NECC, the ranks of succeeding classes would not have swollen as they did. As in all great crusades, faith in the cause was central.

For the other two groups of pilgrims, the faculty and the staff, there were comparable impacts from inadequate facilities, but there was also the sustaining hope that soon things would change for the better: the millennium would come and they would be part of it. This look-to-the-future psychological compensation was felt early and used frequently by the founding President. In this third annual report in August 1964, Mr. Bentley would



write:

The experience of the past year offers much promise for the coming days where great steps will undoubtedly be made as the development of the new facility will be finally accomplished.

## **B. Facilities and the Faculty**

In general, the faculty of Northern Essex was less affected on a day-to-day basis by the facilities problems than either the students or the staff. Instructors, then as now, could do the basic job with a classroom, a piece of chalk, a briefcase and their own fund of knowledge and experience. That was pretty much what they had to work with for the first ten years. There were few amenities and a bare minimum of instructional equipment; there was no AV department or secretarial support center to call upon for assistance. Still, the environment did have important impacts on the way they functioned and related both to students and to each other.

In the first place, the shortage of resources meant that for the first several years most of the faculty were part-time, hired to teach one or two sections of a course and not expected to spend long hours on the campus. But, by the mid-sixties, the number of full-time positions increased rapidly and part-time teachers became the exception rather than the rule. It was recognized that community college students needed a great deal of help, encouragement, advice and interaction with the faculty and the hiring of committed full timers addressed that need. But how could the faculty be made accessible in the cramped quarters of Chadwick Street? Where could they “park,” not only between classes, but even their cars? A few of the “lucky” earliest faculty were assigned “office space” in one of the very narrow corridors used long ago to store the coats and overshoes for the Greenleaf Elementary School pupils, and the rest of the faculty got a desk (shared with one or more colleagues) in the large open area which was left after half of the upstairs auditorium had been converted into the college library. It was either isolation or intense togetherness. Very often faculty would find their “office” occupied by a colleague and would have to keep advising appointments with their students by suggesting a walk down a corridor or a conference out in the parking lot or on the stone “sitting wall” in front of the school. The latter option was not very helpful from November through March. Still, without a lounge or even a coat-rack, they managed; after all, everyone else was “roughing it.” And there were several advantages to the situation. For lunch, one could always find one or more colleagues who, on a minute’s notice, would want to escape from the busy bullpen for a while. Departmental teaching aids (maps, charts and ditto masters) were most probably to be found in a colleague’s desk, so conversation was important and no one was a stranger after his first day on the job. Sharing built solidarity and deep friendships. It also led to a log of comparing of notes on the progress or problems of particular students. The faculty developed a strong sense of togetherness which crossed disciplines, because a math teacher might find a Spanish teacher at the desk to his left and an historian at the desk to their right (the desks were about six inches apart). Even after the college acquired “big space” in the former

Haverhill High School, the “bullpen” concept was continued; about 40 teachers were “officed” in three adjoining rooms. It was a hectic, busy, noisy scene, but very much alive with professional chit-chat. Perhaps it is not too surprising that many of the pioneer faculty members would deeply miss the environment of camaraderie when they moved into the long corridors of small private office space at the Elliott Street campus. Today when a memorandum comes out explaining some institutional decision or policy, one reads it alone and probably files it. Then, one read it and turned to someone else in the “bullpen” and asked “What do you think of this?”



The very nature of the faculty was also heavily influenced by the facilities and resources available in the first decade; it was basically a liberal arts faculty with several additional members for each of the other program areas: engineering and electronics, business, and secretarial science. The implementation of most of the “occupational” programs which the college was planning and anxious to start had to await the space and facilities opportunities of the new campus. Thus the transfer of graduates into four-year institutions was much more of a faculty concern than the immediate entry of graduates into the job market. It was simply impossible to offer a comprehensive academic program on the campus of the sixties; curriculum development was a major victim of the circumstances, with the notable exception of the Associate Degree program in Nursing which was designed in 1967 and implemented in 1968. It could be started because most of the equipment and facilities necessary were already in place in the area hospitals where the student nurses would be receiving “on-the-job” instruction and experience.

The difficulty of securing adequate resources also put a damper on faculty initiative. The music teacher had no piano or other college-owned

instruments, the art instructor had no studio space, and the drama instructor had no stage, since the auditorium stages at both Chadwick Street and Summer Street had been converted to office space (tiny “cubicles”) for admissions, financial aid, and counseling personnel. Productions, therefore, were creations made almost out of nothing other than human talent and desire, but the shows did go on thanks to faculty members John Mainer, Rochelle Newman, Al Brenner and Gene Boles. Even for something so crucial as the college computer, it always seemed to be a case of beg and borrow. In 1967, the Western Electric Company helped the college by donating IBM wiring panels for a new model 407 accounting machine and, in his letter of thanks, Mr. Bentley noted:

We could use up to ten of these panels in the teaching of our computer technology curriculum. We could also use any 407 wires that can be spared.

In this area, Northern Essex pioneered. A feature article in the *Haverhill Gazette* of May 20, 1967 reported:

A highly-sophisticated computer system-the first in a Massachusetts Community College-will be installed at Northern Essex Community College next week...The new campus on Kenoza Lake will have a space specially designed for the computer facility.

The first half of this report did come true; as to the second promise, it would take years of complex negotiations with the state government before a really effective computer facility could be set up in 1983. Yet in 1967, the college was very proud and pleased to be in the vanguard of hi-tech, even though it had no card punch capability for its new IBM 1130 and had to write to the Pentucket Regional High School for permission to use their machine to punch cards during the summer of 1967. Such equipment and facilities problems were a major concern for faculty members John L. Sullivan and Donald Horgan, who taught the courses in Computer Technology. For administrative uses of the system, it was not until October, 1970 that a Computer Center Director, Dwight Killam, Jr., could be hired.

Other faculty members (indeed, all college personnel) paid a heavy price for the state's hesitancy to provide state-of-the-art capabilities. This was most visible during the many “arena registrations” of the era. Hundreds of students would mill around at one time in an “arena” (e.g., the Summer Street Cafeteria), confer with faculty advisors, glance anxiously at the portable blackboards which displayed courses as they “closed” and wait in never-ending lines for the semi-annual ordeal of manual registration to conclude. In the words of the first Registrar, Donald Charlesworth, the college had to find some way out of its “Stone-Age” procedures. It was no great consolation to the exhausted faculty, counselors, secretaries and deans-or to the exasperated students-that this, too, was essentially just a facilities problem which would go away in the future. Then it was a big part of the NECC challenge.

## C. Facilities and the Administrative Staff

Nowhere, however, was the crunch of inadequate facilities more keenly felt than among the small band of administrators and clerical staff who sought constant expansion and improvement of the young college. Reference has already been made to the installation of counseling, admissions, and financial aid "offices" on a stage. At first, it was simply a matter of placing a desk and chairs on the stage. Then came the realization that the view from the floor area below was too spectacular - so folding screens were added and new employees such as, Cecilia Furlotte, Betty Coyne and Sue Horowitz could do their work without feeling as if they were in a chorus line of the Rockettes or Folies Bergeres. Elsewhere on Chadwick Street, the Librarian, Peter Simoglou, had an office big enough for himself, two books and a wastebasket. Beneath him was the big main office with its three internal offices for the deans of faculty, students, and administration. These were more spacious cubicles which could accommodate everything enjoyed by the librarian with space left over for visitors-provided they came one at a time. There were no waiting benches anywhere for visitors, since every seat was needed in the thirteen classrooms. Taking all things into consideration, there was strong motivation to expand so that a new campus could be justified and built, the sooner the better.

Like his successor John Dimitry, President Bentley knew that enrollments drive public education budgets and building programs. And so he sought and found additional classroom space. In Bradford, the Grange and the People's Methodist Church and in Haverhill, the First Congregational Church, the Hellenic Orthodox Church and the former Haverhill High School provided the necessary space for expansion. Together these rented facilities represented an additional twenty-seven classrooms. This allowed the college to put its "open door" philosophy into practice and made possible a tenfold increase in the size of the student body. Northern Essex proved beyond all doubt that its request for a large, permanent campus was justified. As each September's enrollment figures rose (usually from 200-300 each year), Mr. Bentley must have felt more and more of an aura of reality when he showed visitors the scale model of the new campus which he kept on a large table in his Chadwick Street office.

From 1965 to 1971, the utilization of these "satellites" also created logistical and administrative challenges of no small magnitude. Imagine, for example, the problem faced by Dean Ruhl in drawing up the schedule of classes for the fall semester of 1968. In that year, Amesbury High School, which for several years had been using the former Haverhill High School for all of its classes from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m., was about to return to Amesbury and leave the Summer Street building-completely available for NECC. Up until then, the college had only used it from 3-6 p.m. (an arrangement which forced both faculty and students into a routine of three hours without a break). But the building offered twenty-two classrooms and was to be vacated by Amesbury High School sometime in September. Dean Ruhl solved the problem by posting a Schedule of Classes which listed every course with its meeting time and with two locations, one "temporary" and one "permanent." The system could only work by having three or four sections of a given course meet for the first few weeks of the semester in

the large function hall of the Hellenic Orthodox Church on Winter Street. Large-group lectures were held and the faculty experienced both the joys and challenges of team teaching.



Finally, in mid-October, the Amesbury students were able to move into their own town high school and NECC classes were all shifted to the former Haverhill High School building, which was complete with “up staircases,” “down staircases,” and, soon, with a new, large wooden sign proclaiming it the home of Northern Essex Community College. That sign, incidentally, was moved in 1971 to a spot at the main entrance to the Kenoza Lake campus.

Space utilization in 1968 tells much about the way it was in the late sixties. The dean was determined not to let a lack of space prevent accepting students; his scheme was ingenious. The community responded by providing the temporary locations. The local police looked the other way as students inevitably parked illegally in their confused scramble among the six sites. The faculty and staff cooperated. The “great shift” of 1968 was one more successful milestone for those pilgrims of the first decade, one more challenge turned into an opportunity, and one more discovery that because it had the will, NECC could find a way, facilities notwithstanding.

# Curriculum Development to 1971

When he made his first annual report to the MBRCC in the summer of 1962, Mr. Bentley noted that, during its first academic year, Northern Essex had offered three degree programs and a total of thirty-four individual courses. A student registering for the fall 1984 semester was able to select from the sixty-four programs and 503 courses listed in the Registration and Counseling Handbook. This contrast represents tremendous expansion of educational opportunity. How and when did it come about?

Some of the development was stimulated by outside economic and societal forces, but most of it came from within. And while certain individuals were to play key roles in expressing that impulse, it was essentially an organic and functional growth of the institution as a whole. The starting point was a philosophy of education contained in part in the legislation which created the Massachusetts community colleges and even more so in the experience and aspirations of the founding President and the faculty he was to select. Some elements of this philosophy were revealed when Mr. Bentley spoke to the Haverhill League of Women Voters on November 18, 1960:

The program will permit a student to explore his or her possibilities ... We are not going to train purely technicians. We are going to train people. The program will be rounded.

These two concepts of flexibility and broadness went into the academic foundation of NECC and have always remained as underlying principles. They showed up in the first NECC brochure, which came out in April, 1961. This twelve-page pamphlet did not pretend to be a catalog, but it did set forth the institutional philosophy as well as describe the programs in Liberal Arts, Business, and Electronics Technology which were to be-

gin in September, 1961. The brochure provided program outlines but no course descriptions. It projected two different Liberal Arts programs (identified then as 1 and 2 and later called the General Liberal Arts (GLA) and the Liberal (LA) programs, three offerings in Business (Management, Accounting, and Medical Secretarial) and the Electronics Technology Program. Each of these curricula was clearly labeled "Tentative." Each was designed single-handedly by Mr. Bentley, who drew on his long experience at Worcester Junior College to make programs of exceptional breadth and strength, programs which would be very "safe" bases either for transfer or for immediate job placement. All were "low-cost" programs which could easily be started in the modest facility that was promised.

The content of all six programs was very rigorous, as evidenced by the number of credits required in each for successful completion of the Associate Degree: LA 1-64-68 credits; LA 2-68 credits; Management-79 credits; Accounting-75 credits; Medical Secretarial-66 credits; Electronics Tech-88 credits.

At a much later point in time, associate degree programs at NECC, and in the state system generally, were designed with a minimum of 60 credit hours and strong justification had to be given for any required credits above that level. By the start of academic 1963-64, a downward revision had already occurred; by then there was a "real" college catalog which stated the following minimums for degree completion: LA-64; GLA-62; Management-62; Accounting-62; Secretarial-66; Electronics Tech-72.

To graduate, a student had to maintain a straight C (2.0) quality point average and had to participate, in person, in Commencement exercises. No one received his degree *in absentia*, and letters of recommendation for acceptance by transfer institutions would only be written for those who earned a C or better in all their courses. It is small wonder that NECC quickly earned a widespread reputation for academic excellence; it was a performance-oriented college.

As early as 1962, there was a Curriculum Committee which met several times a year and which reflected a cross-section of the rapidly growing faculty. The membership of the 1962 committee included Dr. Malloy, Dr. Wood, Bob Paul (then in the Business Department), Dr. Katherine Richards (then the only full-time woman faculty member), James Sullivan, and Richard Mesle.

On October 2, 1962, this Committee met to discuss the NECC curriculum in Liberal Arts as it related to the distribution requirements of the first two years at the University of Massachusetts. After lively debate around "doing one's own thing" or taking a "safe" model from a four-year state institution, the Committee voted to adopt the U. Mass core as a model. This turned out to be an eminently wise decision because, within several years, a large number of NECC graduates did matriculate at U. Mass and did very well there. The state university then lent its powerful support to the acceptance of community college graduates as juniors; the state colleges and private transfer institutions soon followed suit. Especially good institutional relationships were developed very early with Salem State College, whose Registrar, James T. Amsler (later to become the President at North Adams State College and, Salem State), was a strong pioneer supporter of easy transition from the community college to the baccalaureate

institution, and with Lowell Technological Institute, another prime choice of NECC graduates for more advanced studies. By the time of the 1966-67 catalog, NECC could advertise that its graduates had been accepted by at least 34 senior institutions across the nation, from Amherst College to the University of West Virginia and San Fernando Valley State College in California.



During the late sixties and into the early seventies, a concerted effort was made to begin programming for health-related careers. The first and most ambitious step taken was the development of the Nursing Program in 1967-68. A full-time nurse educator, Mrs. Barbara Roth, was appointed in 1967 to plan the curriculum, which accepted its first class in September, 1968. This was the first program adopted which required separate approval by a specialized accreditation agency, a consideration which certainly encouraged the college to promptly seek institutional accreditation by the regional agency, the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC). In a number of important ways, including clerical support for academic departments, carefully outlined course objectives, more stringent admissions criteria and insistence on adequate equipment, the addition of the nursing program exerted a powerful influence on the entire college. From the outset, it set and achieved the highest standards for itself and its students. As noted in the report of the evaluation team from the New England Association in the autumn of 1969:

The new Nursing Program clearly meets community needs. Furthermore, it points standards for the rest of the college to achieve, for example, in such areas as secretarial support for faculty or office space.



Another new program, Medical Record Technology, was launched in 1969 and also reflected the growing interest in careers connected with the health service professions. Nine members of the graduating class of 1971 received their associate degrees in this specialty. Upon graduation, they could either enter the job market directly as Medical Record Technicians or transfer into a four-year baccalaureate program which would qualify them as Medical Record Librarians. Only one other Massachusetts community college (Holyoke) was offering this program at the time. The program consisted of 65 credits, of which 40 were for general education courses and 25 for technical courses in the medical records field. With almost one-third of its technical coursework described as "Directed Practice," this program, like the Nursing Program, helped to establish the need and academic legitimacy of direct hands-on experience in an affiliated health agency off the campus. It also underscored the need for the creation of an academic division, the Division of Health Services, which was promised in the 1969 *Evaluation Report* "as programs are added in this area."

An important curriculum development arose when the college began



to address the needs of many students for developmental education. In the educational language of the early sixties, this was referred to as the "salvage" mission of the community college, i.e., giving an opportunity to those who up until then either did not consider themselves "college material" or were not so considered by the traditional schools to which they had applied.

Speaking in 1964 at the Worcester Teachers' Institute, President Bentley expressed a curriculum philosophy which recognized the need for outreach to these students. Massachusetts, he stated, would be the poorer unless

... we are able to show our youngsters there is a way through the community college system for them to become more than they are-what they want to be ... we are salvaging many youngsters who should attend college and never would have before.

This philosophy received tangible expression at NECC beginning in the summer of 1964, when a new admissions procedure for students with weak academic backgrounds was inaugurated. It was officially called the "Opportunity Program" and, popularly the "O" Program. Through it, a student not granted admission to a full program during the first semester could enroll in two courses of the summer session and in two evening courses in the fall semester. By earning a C or better in each of these courses, the student was assured admission to a regular degree program in the "day college" at the start of the ensuing spring semester. For several hundred students of the sixties, the "O" Program was their key to the "open door" at NECC.

During the late sixties, the college judged that it needed a more active outreach to educationally disadvantaged citizens of the region. A full-time reading specialist, Patricia McDermott, was added to the faculty in 1969. Federal funds, channeled through the Massachusetts Department of Education and the MBRC, were beginning to become available for remedial and developmental programs, and Northern Essex wasted no time in designing a semester-long academic program called "Discovery" to meet the need and opportunity. The official purpose of the Discovery Program was

to offer students from racially and educationally diverse backgrounds an opportunity to pursue an education in spite of social, cultural, and educational handicaps. The program is designed to offer remedial courses, specially designed college-level courses, extensive tutorial assistance, and scholarship aid to students of the Merrimack Valley who would not achieve success in regular college programs.

The Discovery Program, coordinated at the outset by Sheila Shively, also broke new ground by being interdisciplinary, by using a format of team teaching reinforced by intensive caring and counseling, and, above all, by a unique spirit of sharing among its faculty and students. It developed into a kind of "family" endeavor to carry out the "salvage" mission with both human warmth and academic soundness. Although its numbers always remained small (usually about fifty students per semester), it quickly earned and retained a very special and influential place in the curriculum and life of the college. In speaking to students in 1961, President Bentley had observed that, "Not failure, but low aim is a crime." Discovery was a curriculum aimed at reversing previous personal failure and frustration by enabling those in it to readjust their aims and expectations. In retrospect, many might argue that its adoption was the major curriculum decision of the first ten years.

Another dimension of early curriculum change was the constant process of the revision and refinement of the existing programs. For instance, throughout academic year 1968-69, the Department of Business Admin-

istration conducted an intensive review of its existing programs in Management and Accounting and strengthened the content of both curricula. It also devised a new program called "Business Transfer" for its many students whose goal was clearly to continue to the baccalaureate degree. By 1980, more than 350 students had graduated in this program, which remains one of the largest programs offered. By 1970, however, a new college governance structure, the Academic Council, was put in place and its Curriculum Committee, which included student representation as well as faculty members from all academic areas, became the recommending agent for all curriculum changes. From its inception in the spring of 1970, this new Curriculum Committee was kept extremely busy with proposals for growth and change. It was by then possible to begin planning in terms of the vast program expansion which the space and facilities of the new campus would allow.

For several other reasons, the end of the sixties was a watershed for such planning. In December of 1969, the college received a ten-year accreditation from the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. The visiting team had cited no weaknesses in the program area. In fact, four of the twelve "strengths" which it reported complimented the curriculum then in place:

1. The Visiting Committee judged the overall program of studies to be solid ...
9. The new Nursing Program clearly meets community needs ...
10. The technical programs are well designed, especially the arrangement for transfer to Lowell Technological Institute.
11. The relationship ... to the University of Massachusetts with respect to transfer programs and the ease of transfer is commendable.

With such a strong endorsement from the regional accrediting agency, there could have arisen an institutional complacency and inertia. Instead, NECC used this recognition of its solidity as a green light to begin a new era of constant change and expansion. The governing board, the MBRCC, was actively urging the creation of many new occupational and developmental programs. The facilities of the new campus were at hand, almost within reach. But, above all, there was a sense of institutional pride, an aura of confidence and optimism, a real embracing of the challenge for the college, as well as its students, to "become more than what it is-what it wants to be," a comprehensive community college.

### The Faculty and Internal Governance to 1975

During the fall Semester of 1961, the faculty of Northern Essex was comprised of four full-time teachers and seven part-time teachers. There were no counselors or librarians. During the fall semester of 1984, the day division faculty consisted of 128 full-time teachers, 67 part-time teachers, four counselors and four librarians. The growth of the faculty obviously had kept pace with the remarkable growth of the college as a whole.

During the first seven years, the role and influence of the NECC faculty was relatively small outside of the classroom. But from 1968 to 1975, an amazing evolution occurred which made its role and influence expand to a point seldom achieved on any campus. This evolution was unique among the Massachusetts community colleges; it transformed the “benevolent monarchy” earlier described into a thriving constitutional monarchy in which the major institutional policies and decisions were made in partnership between faculty and administration. For nearly a decade, an extraordinary degree of collegiality was to characterize that partnership and facilitate the growth and maturation of the college as a whole. In that era, strong traditions of discussion, information-sharing and consensus-reaching were developed and became a permanent part of the fabric of Northern Essex.

At the outset, the Northern Essex faculty was primarily young, male and part-time. Many of its members came from the faculty of local high schools and had no previous college teaching experience. In part, that was an advantage in that they knew the local school systems and the academic backgrounds of the students, who were mostly recent high school graduates. Frequently, a student would arrive at the first meeting of a course at Northern Essex and discover that he already studied with the instructor in high school.

During the first two years, most of the women on the faculty were

part-timers. Some, like Olga Williams, became full-time faculty. Most of the others left after having helped to get the college started. It was in fact a “male era,” as was evident from both the forms one had to fill out for employment and the tone of administrative memos about faculty hiring.

President Bentley’s second annual report (September 6, 1963) shows that during the second year of operation, the teaching staff consisted of 15 full-timers and only four part-timers. In academic year 1968-69, there were 66 full-timers and still only four part-timers. By the end of the period here considered, in 1975, the totals respectively were 125 and 17. Thus the employment of part-time faculty was consistently very slight and was generally confined to highly specialized areas of the curriculum, such as Nursing, Medical Record Technology, and Sport and Leisure Studies. Most of the departments did not include a single part-time member. This record of the proportion of part-timers in the total faculty also is noteworthy in reflecting its constant and dramatic growth during the first fifteen years.

In some years more than twenty new positions would be authorized (usually late in June), with a resultant “crash program” to find the best teachers available for the following September. Representative years were 1966, when 17 new full-time positions were added and 1967, when 21 teachers (including the author) joined the faculty. Every autumn there were newspaper stories, complete with photos, of the growth of the faculty. The region took notice and took pride in the expansion of the NECC faculty.

The pioneer group of women faculty who came to the college before 1968 included: Katherine Richards, Olga Williams, Vera Allen (Chemistry), Marlene Molinoff (English and the first advisor of *Parnassus*), Etta Wolpert (English), Marilyn Crocker (English), Anne Truitt (Biology), Grace Costanzo (Secretarial Science), Eleanor Hope-McCarthy (English) Sandra Fofinos (English), Anne Laszlo (History), and Barbara Roth (Nursing). Like their male colleagues, most came to stay. Two, Olga Williams and Corinne Grise, later “rose” out of the faculty into administrative positions as Division Chairpersons. The percentage of women in the faculty was also rising, as the following full-time faculty numbers show:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>
1962-1963	15	14	1
1967-1968	59	48	11
1975-1976	125	86	39

Nevertheless, the ratio did not change as rapidly as the composition of the student body did; most of the part-time faculty continued to be women and the major faculty leadership roles as department and division chairpersons remained almost exclusively a male preserve during the first fifteen years.

In keeping with its general policy of granting a large measure of autonomy to the college Presidents, the MBRCC left the matter of faculty hiring pretty much a local concern. Very early, it did adopt a policy that faculty applicants should have at least a Master’s degree in their discipline, or at least a Bachelor’s degree in technical or specialized skill areas of the

curriculum. It also exercised its sole power of approving all faculty appointments. The MBRCC also ensured that no college would violate an obscure but long-lived “quota system” which mandated certain limits on ranks at each institution. Under this system, the Bureau of Personnel and Standardization, the community colleges were assigned faculty positions as follows: Professor: not more than 25% of total positions; Professor and Associate Professor: not more than 45% of total positions; Professor, Associate Professor, Assistant Professor: not more than 75% of total positions; Instructor: at least 25% of total positions. In intent, this pattern was to prevent the faculties of the new system from becoming “top-heavy” in the upper ranks, although it was entirely possible in the first few years to receive an initial appointment as an Associate Professor or Professor, and a few fortunate early members of the NECC faculty benefitted from the arrangement. But it also blocked the promotion ladder for many, even when they had necessary credentials, experience, and time served in a lower rank. From the faculty perspective, the system operated to make the faculty “bottom-heavy” and discouraged opportunity for professional advancement. It also meant that after 1966, nearly all faculty initial appointments were recommended at the Instructor level, in order to preserve “promotion slots” for those already on the staff. Since the salary differentials between the ranks were very significant, and since there were no written standards for placement or promotion, the issue became a major faculty concern and helped create a strong faculty desire for active input into the institutional governance process.



*First NECC commencement exercises, held at Bradford College.*

During most of the first decade, the rank and salary of the individual faculty member depended heavily on his personal relationship with the college President. The academic community was small and the President personally interviewed and selected the faculty. He relied after 1962 on earlier interviews and recommendations from the Dean of Faculty and, in time, on even earlier interviews and recommendations of department and division chairpersons. There was also an annual "contract interview" between the President and each individual faculty member. This meeting provided an opportunity to discuss any topic of mutual interest, but in essence it was a negotiating session to settle whether the teacher would be returning the following year and, if so, on what terms. Sometimes it was possible to negotiate a "double increment" (for outstanding service) or even a second consecutive annual promotion in rank. Whatever "PAR's" (Personnel Action Requests) the President recommended, favorable action could be expected from the MBRCC. These contract interviews also represented the process of faculty evaluation at that time. There were neither forms nor set procedures for measuring and describing faculty performance. One merely heard the President's perception of his classroom effectiveness. The system was administratively simple and direct, but for many it seemed too informal and subjective. The faculty's desire and chance for input was greatly strengthened in 1969 when the visiting accreditation team reported that one institutional weakness at NECC was that:

There appeared to be only a loosely planned program for faculty evaluation. Furthermore, there seemed to be no clearly worked out statement of standards ... for such matters as promotion and tenure.

Soon thereafter, began the evolution of an elaborate network of policy and procedure in which the faculty became directly and significantly involved with these issues.

In general, the development of a professional climate for and among the NECC faculty was both slow and minimal during the first five years. Perhaps its lack was compensated for by the sense of being part of a bold new educational enterprise. Perhaps there was a feeling that all would become quite-professional when the "promised land" of a new campus was reached. But that promised land kept receding into a seemingly more distant horizon. The faculty began to grow impatient and to chafe, not only over the primitive facilities and equipment, but even more so over their apparent exclusion from the making of institutional policies. They understood that some of their working conditions were beyond local control, that some were, in fact, determined in Boston by the action or the inaction of the MBRCC or the state legislature. They were, ultimately, employees of the MBRCC and of the Commonwealth, rather than of the college. There was also discontent with the holding of faculty meetings in the late afternoon, with the insecurity of one-year individual contracts, with the absence of opportunity for tenure or sabbatical leave, and with an implied policy that, as teachers, they should exercise a kind of paternal control over students and accept a kind of benevolent paternalism over their own destinies.

One factor which accounts for both the faculty's impatience with these conditions and the ultimate course by which they sought to change them was the difficulty NECC experienced in finding effective long-term academic leadership below the presidential level. Between 1961 and 1968, there were three different Deans of Faculty. Many academic decisions appeared to be made by the Dean of Administration. Much of the President's time and attention had to be devoted to student concerns and the planning for a permanent campus; faculty matters simply had a low priority; perhaps the faculty did its job too well and did not seem to require as much attention as other areas. In any case, a pressing need for organization and leadership of the academic staff developed in the mid-sixties and began to be met with the appointment of a new academic Dean, Donald Ruhl, in the summer of 1968. At the first meeting of the faculty for academic year 1968-69, President Bentley announced that he had appointed Don, not as "Dean of Faculty" but as "Dean of the College," adding (somewhat to the dismay of those present) that a "Dean of Faculty" might tend to become a "Dean for the Faculty," and that the title change indicated his determination not to see the college divided into "administration" and "faculty" as if these were separate and possibly adversarial groups. Having both taught at NECC and having served since 1964 as Dean of Students gave Don an ideal base for his new expanded role. He quickly demonstrated that it was possible for an academic dean to sympathize with and promote faculty interests while still preserving the full confidence Mr. Bentley had in him. As Don saw things, growth of the faculty



(already very evident in sheer numbers) could include growth of its role as well. By continuing to stay closely attuned to student affairs (he also served as supervisor of the new Dean of Students, Church Stafford, and his growing staff of counselors and other student personnel specialists) and by asserting academic jurisdiction over the rapidly expanding evening division, Dean Ruhl managed to unify and solidify the educational mission of the college. Among the academic components, by 1970, only the Library continued to report directly to the President; it too would ultimately come within the academic structure which Don envisaged and created between 1968 and 1978, when he left to take up a community college presidency in Maryland. To both the founding President and its farsighted Dean of the College, NECC is indebted for the selection and encouragement of a bold and imaginative faculty which was about to claim a larger role for itself.

The situation which confronted Don Ruhl when he first took on this new position in July 1968 was immensely challenging. The student popula-



tion was exploding beyond the capacity of the facilities; the college was still unaccredited; he had thirteen new full-time faculty positions to fill before Labor Day and it was already after the Fourth of July! Of that faculty “class of 68,” all stayed for at least several years and six were still present in 1990: Paula Boxer, George Hickey, Dolores Haritos, Gerard Morin, James Gustafson, and Robert Sacchetti. Another member of the same group, George DeHullu, retired in 1984. George had been a member of the first class to graduate (1963) from Northern Essex and came close to being the first graduate to return to the college as part of the faculty. He was edged out for this distinction, however, by his classmate, Jack Wysong, who joined



the English Department one year earlier in 1967. By 1975, there were three other members of the alumni teaching full-time at NECC: Pamela Donahue, Dolores Thompson, and Joseph Rizzo. In the 1982-84 college catalog, an additional ten “alumni returning” are listed as full-time faculty. In all of these cases, there is mutual compliment implied: the graduate expresses a belief in the work of the college and the college, on its part, recognizes the significance of its own degrees.

NECC alumni, however, still constitute only a small fraction of the total faculty. In fact, one of the most striking features of the faculty is its non-provincial background. It includes members from many foreign countries and from all regions of the United States. This diversity was not accidental; it was an unwritten policy of institutional enrichment which influenced faculty selection by Harold Bentley and Don Ruhl. One day in the summer of 1970, for example, the author met Dean Ruhl in an even more than usually enthusiastic mood because, on that day, he and the President had just had successive and successful hiring interviews with an Irish-American Jesuit professor of English, Paul McGrady, and an Olympic javelin thrower from India, Usha Sellers, who not only talked about introducing courses in anthropology, but even offered her hosts a cigar to celebrate their mutual agreement. And on that same day, they had also signed up (as new members of the Department of History and Government) mid-Westerner James McCosh, holder of a Bachelor of Divinity degree from Northern Baptist Theological Seminary and Chester Hawryciw, a Ukrainian-American baseball and football star from Ludlow, Massachusetts who had just completed a Master's degree at the University of California at Santa Barbara. Just one day's work in the building of a diverse faculty! Two of that foursome, Chet and Usha, were also to “graduate” from the faculty into positions as division chairpersons

where they would themselves later be directly involved in faculty selection.

The climate, both in the classroom and outside of it, encouraged each faculty member to speak and act as he saw fit, to experiment with teaching methodology, and to become involved (or not to become involved) with current social or political issues. Here, too, there was for a long time an absence of written policy. Not until May, 1968 did the MBRCC adopt a policy on academic freedom and tenure. When it did so, it chose a good one, the nationally accepted 1940 Statement on Academic Freedom and Tenure of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP). With the advent of unionization in 1976, this policy was incorporated into and formed part of the collective bargaining agreement.

But the NECC faculty did not wait for either the governing board or for the union to assert and enjoy professional freedoms. The author, for example, refused in 1968 to use the sign-in, sign-out sheet in the main office. He was quickly “invited” to a conference with the Dean and the President, where he simply asserted that such a procedure was demeaning, unprofessional, and unnecessary. The conference was a bit volatile, but it resulted in the ending of the objectionable procedure and its replacement by a system of self-reporting of faculty absences.

No single event or crisis occurred at Northern Essex to produce an autonomous faculty organization. At the beginning of academic year 1964-65, for example, the college published a list of faculty committees for the year. Seven committees were listed, with approximately 50 specific assignments. There was room, among all of these, for one member of the “Development Committee” to be “elected by faculty!” The rest were appointments. Still, the single “elected” slot may have been more important than all the rest, because it opened a door to the concept of representative service and thereby encouraged faculty to find ways of choosing such a representative. Once ajar, a door tends to open wide.

When it appeared during 1967-68, the Faculty Association was far more the product of evolution than of revolution. In May of 1967, there had been a meeting of 11 faculty representatives from the individual campuses in the system. Bob Paul represented Northern Essex. A plan was proposed to create an association of “Massachusetts Community College Faculties” to promote faculty interests vis-a-vis the Presidents’ Council and the MRBCC. On October 9, 1967, Bob sent a memo to all NECC faculty reporting on this proposal and asking them for help in the local election of a Northern Essex delegate and alternate for academic year 1967-68. He also raised the possibility of the

Election of several faculty officers, such as faculty chairman or president, vice-chairman or vice-president, secretary, treasurer, and perhaps a standing committee to serve faculty needs (?) and/or a faculty social committee to establish elbow-bending affairs.

The mood was far more one of “elbow-bending” than of “arm twisting.” Professor Alfred Emerson, in fact, recalls that President Bentley in particular had urged the faculty to organize itself for what he foresaw as a rapidly changing set of employment conditions. All in all, however, the title of “Father of the Faculty Association” probably belongs more to Bob Paul

than to any other single individual. It was his proposal which quickly led to the forming of the organization. The Constitution and Bylaws Committee wasted no time. Chosen in October, 1967, it produced on December 20, 1967, a draft constitution for discussion "as soon as practical in 1968." The constitution was written mainly by John Guarino, with Al Emerson, Richard Ellis, and Olga Williams being the other committee members. In February, 1968, there were several meetings and mailbox ballots to decide on the specific content of particular articles. Article II, which passed unanimously as written, stated the objective of the organization:

The objective of the organization is to improve the quality of education at the community college level through the formation of a closer professional bond among its members and the pursuance of the welfare of its members.

This objective has remained unchanged over the years. Article III, however, was controversial, since it defined membership. In one version "all educators" were eligible. In the alternate version, there was a restriction, which was purposely exclusive. It read:

All educators employed at Northern Essex Community College are members, providing that said persons have as a part of their duties regularly scheduled classroom teaching activities.

By the beginning of March, 1968, the alternative version was chosen; the faculty had defined itself as a group of teachers. Not until 1975, in the process of collective bargaining, would other professional staff members, e.g., counselors and librarians, become eligible for membership.

The faculty association had no problem in attracting members. For example, in its second year, 1968-69, all but one of the 69 persons eligible joined; the annual dues was minimal (five dollars) and went into a Scholarship Fund for NECC students. The many issues related to the "welfare of its members" guaranteed, for several years, a lively interest and active participation in the work of the Northern Essex Community College Faculty Association (NECCFA) and its various committees. At the same time, about 80 percent of the NECC faculty also joined the statewide organization, the Massachusetts Regional Community College Faculty Association (MRCCFA), which formally came into existence shortly after the local organization. Although teachers were a vast majority of its membership, MRCCFA was unlike the local in that all professional personnel in the system were eligible. Perhaps because of this, it received encouragement and cooperation from the Presidents' Council and from the MBRCC, both of which invited it to send a representative to attend their regular meetings, where policies of great system wide import were formulated and approved. Richard Ellis served as the first Secretary of MRCCFA and Charles Reilly was chosen in 1969 and again in 1970 as its representative at MBRCC meetings. After 1975, MRCCFA would evolve into the Massachusetts Community College Council (MCCC) and acquire both a more restricted constituency and a much greater influence.

Most of the attention and effort of NECCFA, however, was focused on Northern Essex itself. When academic year 1968-69 began, the major institutional concern was how to get the college accredited. During the fall semester that year, President Bentley appointed a six-member faculty Accreditation Committee to collect the necessary data and prepare the required self-study report to the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. The chairman of this committee, John Spurr, also served that year as President of NECCFA and proposed that the association should



also have a similar committee to monitor and assist in the process. The proposal originally met with some concern on the part of the administration. Was this to be a rival committee? Could not the appointed committee be trusted? The NECCFA leaders, however, insisted that only a broad-based input into the self-study process would ensure a successful result; the administration decided to accept NECCFA's wishes in the matter and the organization proceeded to elect its own Accreditation Committee, which was chaired by Dr. F. John Osborne. Throughout the self-study process, which was conducted in the spring and summer of 1969, this NECCFA committee followed the work of the appointed committee. Whenever the "official" committee completed a section of the report, it was read and discussed by the "unofficial" committee, whose self-chosen task was to ensure that the college should describe itself as it actually was at that point in time. It was a kind of watchdog, but also something more, for it provided many specific and useful recommendations.

Preparing NECC for its first visit by an evaluation team of the regional accrediting agency turned out to be a major event and a long-term catalyst, not just for the faculty, but for the college as a whole. There was so much to be done in order to meet the rigorous published standards of the NEASSC. Custom had to be translated into written policy; the informal arrangements of the first eight years had to be formalized; structure had to be created if the test were to be passed. The administration realized that major change was needed and could only come about if the entire academic community were involved. During the first nine months of 1969,

NECC probably changed more than at any other point in its history. A long-talked-of college “Organization and Information Guide” was finally produced. It included all major policies and procedures, as well as job descriptions for the entire staff. A new comprehensive academic structure of divisions and departments was put in place. An art studio, a drama center, and a reference library were created at the Summer Street campus. The Faculty Association was informed and consulted concerning all these changes. Sometimes NECCFA felt that still more needed to be done and it pushed for additional change. With regard to housekeeping, for example, the NECCFA committee worked throughout the summer of 1969 and, on August 6, it sent to the Dean a long list of improvements which it considered essential. Most of the items requested were taken care of within a month, which clearly showed the serious attention of the administration to this request. A list of “demands” might not have fared as well as this list of things desired and recommended. The interface between NECCFA and the college had suddenly become comfortable as well as productive. The President was so comfortable with the situation that he spent most of that summer on an extended trip to the British Isles, while the self-study report was being put in final form by the two committees working closely together. Thus, when the evaluation visit finally took place in early October, 1969, faculty morale was excellent; a most important piece of institutional work had been accomplished by creating a climate of faculty involvement.

The standard of the accrediting agency with regard to faculty was uplifting. It said in part:

The faculty and the quality of its instructional program are the main strengths of an institution of higher education...

When the visiting committee made its report, it noted among the “strengths” of NECC that:

The stability of the faculty reflects the powers of the institution to retain good faculty, and

Faculty attitudes toward the students, toward the administrators and toward the college are positive.

The same report, however, also identified four “weaknesses” in regard to faculty matters:

1. There is a lack of clear definition and of direction with respect to the role of faculty in the governance of the institution in such areas as program building, budget building, and their place within departments and divisions.
2. There appeared to be only a loosely planned program for faculty evaluation. Furthermore, there seemed to be no clearly worked out statement of standards with precise application at Northern Essex for such matters as promotion and tenure.
3. At a number of points there seemed to be wide inconsistency

in the information available to top-level administrators, to middle-level administrators and to faculty. This is true especially in the matter of roles and in matters of faculty evaluation.

4. At present, there is limited support for instruction in terms of secretarial help, duplicating services and audio-visual services.

These and six other criticisms were not swept under a rug; the administration shared them with the faculty. An immense sense of relief and wave of exhilaration swept over Northern Essex several weeks after the receipt of this report. On December 5, 1969, President Bentley telephoned from Boston that the annual business meeting of the NEASSC had just voted membership for a period of ten years to Northern Essex. The college had passed its greatest test with flying colors; it was now a fully accredited institution. But the impact of the process was just beginning. The administration began at once to address some of the weaknesses cited; NECCFA also jumped at the opportunity to secure improvement in these four crucial areas of faculty concern.

Early in December, 1969, NECCFA proposed two new committees, one on "Rank and Promotion Policy" and another to create a Faculty Senate and it invited President Bentley to name two members of his administrative staff to serve on these committees, both of which were charged to report back to NECCFA by March 1, 1970. Mr. Bentley immediately agreed and designated Norman Landry (then serving as Assistant to the President) and Don Ruhl as his appointees. In the letter to NECCFA President Charles Reilly, in which he announced these appointments, Mr. Bentley gave strong encouragement to both efforts:

Your two proposals met with my complete agreement... I look forward to continued and increasing cooperation so that we may see effective action as quickly as possible in these areas.

Both committees had outstanding success. The Rank and Promotion Policy Committee began to draft written in-house criteria for initial appointments and for promotions. The Faculty Senate Committee produced one of the hallmarks of Northern Essex, an organization for institutional governance known as the Academic Council. In both cases, the committees were unwilling to wait any longer for the governing board to produce detailed and effective policies. Local autonomy made their efforts possible, administrative encouragement made their efforts promising, and faculty initiative made their efforts effective. Almost simultaneously, NECCFA created a Committee on Affiliations to explore the possible advantages of collective bargaining under the aegis of some external agency such as the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), or the Massachusetts Teachers Association (MTA). It was as if the college were being given a choice between shared governance and confrontation. NECC chose the former. It allowed the findings of the Rank and Promotion Policy Committee to come before and be adopted by a "general faculty" meeting (one called by the administration and inclusive of professional staff other than teachers) and it also accepted the proposal of the Faculty Senate Committee for a radically

new and unique structure, the Academic Council. Due to the acceptance in March, 1970 of the Academic Council, the work of the Rank and Promotion Policy Committee was subsumed into the new organization in its Faculty Status Committee. The NECCFA membership of these two committees was as follows:

Rank and Promotion Policy Committee: Charles Adie, Wynne Bascom, Brent Bonah, Frank Champoux, Constance Hoyt, Donald Pailes, John Spurk, and Paul Bevilacqua (Chairman)

Faculty Senate Committee: Robert Paul, Charles Reilly, and John Spurk (Chairman).

In its earliest meetings (January, 1970), the Faculty Senate Committee discovered a basic commonality of interest between faculty and administration: how to provide the best educational services. This clearly involved the student body. Thus a decision was taken not to recommend simply a deliberative body of faculty, a traditional "Faculty Senate," but rather to recommend a comprehensive legislature for the entire academic community: faculty, administrators and students. Only the President of the college and the non-professional staff were not included. Mr. Bentley was not offended by this exclusion; it set him in a special category as the independent chief executive to whom the Council would make its recommendations; as a non-member of the Council, he would be better able to review its proposals than if he were actively involved in their formulation. As the Charter of the Council was being drafted, in fact, Mr. Bentley was regularly consulted by the committee and his suggestions were also incorporated into the document, which was released as a committee report on March 9, revised on March 24, accepted by the Faculty Association on April 2, ratified by the general faculty on April 16, and officially adopted by President Bentley on April 21, 1970. The document itself looked very historic; its cover page bore the signatures of the committee members, suggesting a parallel with the Magna Carta and the Declaration of Independence: the birth of a new era. Inside, the content of the Charter was equally dramatic. Its Preamble set the tone:

This Charter ... establishes a deliberative organization with the purpose and the capacity of achieving shared authority and responsibility in the making of decisions and the implementation of the educational policies and practices of Northern Essex Community College.

In order to realize its goal of a "productive partnership," the Charter divided all activity at NECC into two categories:

1. Areas where "the Faculty has primary but not exclusive responsibility" and
2. Areas in which "the Administration has primary but not exclusive responsibility."

Thus, the underlying theory of the Charter was that in a public community college everyone had some responsibility and no one had exclusive responsibility for the general well-being; faculty and administration were to support and encourage each other in carrying out their respective functions.

In May, 1970, the first elections of the Council were held. Donald Pailes won the honor of being the first Chairman. That election, and subsequent ones, turned out to be spirited contests, usually requiring several hours of voting to fill all the offices and the many committee positions, which were distributed both "at large" and as representative of the academic divisions. Noteworthy is the inclusion of student members on the Curriculum Committee and the Student Academic Affairs Committee. Also noteworthy is the presence of administrators and non-teaching professionals on each committee. Finally, it shows that even though some individuals served on more than one committee, over fifty different members of the academic community had volunteered to take part in this new venture of "comprehensive collaborative effort."

The Academic Council introduced very important and substantive committees, in contrast with the period before 1969, when one might have been appointed to a committee on Parking, or Admissions, or perhaps Commencement. The range of areas defined by the Charter as being the "primary responsibility" of the faculty was great in itself. Moreover, two of the committees, Faculty Status and Student Academic Affairs, had attached to them boards of "Recourse and Review," which functioned judicially. Every faculty appointment or recommendation for promotion or tenure had to be "cleared" by the board of the Faculty Status Committee to establish that it conformed to the "guidelines" which the committee created and which the Council first, and then the college, had accepted. Any faculty member who felt wronged could appeal to this board to review the decision of his or her department or division chair, of the dean, or even of the President. It was a highly effective grievance system; the "arbitrators" in fact were one's peers.

The same provision extended to students, who could bring a complaint or grievance before the recourse board of the Student Academic Affairs Committee. Many such cases were heard confidentially before both boards and in almost every case an equitable solution, acceptable to all the parties, was achieved. And all this happened only at Northern Essex. Nowhere else in the Massachusetts community college system were there comparable policies or procedures at that time.

The Academic Council was treated, from the outset, as a serious component of the total college. It had its own budget, its own office, and even its own full-time secretary. Mrs. Ruth Horton, who from 1974 to 1988 devoted her singular professional and human talents in the office of the President, was hired in September of 1970 to be the full-time secretary of the Council. Together with her work-study assistants, Ruth created the administrative climate and system which made the Council effective. The early Council chairs, Don Pailes (1970-72), Jayne Geneva (1972-73) and Mary Harada (1973-75), each provided energetic leadership, but all would admit that without the work of "Mrs. H.," the organization would have been hard pressed to achieve its amazingly successful record. A look into files of the Academic Council for the years 1970-1975 revealed that this ambitious



organization got results around many complex issues ranging from what the curriculum should be, to the dates of each school year, to salary scale proposals, to campus disruptions, to procedures for sabbatical leaves, to the allocation of the institutional budget.



As it developed, the Academic Council really took the heat out of faculty-administration relationships and moved it into the forum of the Council itself. On some occasions, the Council chairman had to threaten to use “sergeants-at-arms” in order to preserve the orderly flow of business. Meetings were conducted according to formal parliamentary procedures, which disenchanted some members, but which also guaranteed full discussion before voting. With both students and administrative members, the Council could and did claim that its recommendations were those of the whole academic community. This carried enormous weight with the President.

When the President received any formal recommendation of the Council, the Charter allowed him only forty days for decision; it became institutional policy if he simply ignored it. If he wished to reject a particular recommendation, he was obliged to give the Council written reasons for the decision to not accept its proposals. There is no record of this provision being exercised; on the other hand, there is voluminous correspondence in which the President accepted and implemented the Council’s hundreds of recommendations in its early years.

The Academic Council was almost “too successful.” Its very success took away from the apparent need for the faculty association which had initiated it. The membership and meetings of the latter declined while the Council flourished in the years between 1970 and 1975. Indeed, except for “outside forces,” NECCFA might have withered on the vine. But the college did not exist in a vacuum; it was still part of the statewide system

of community colleges and of public higher education; the “Utopia” of Northern Essex was about to be changed by those outside forces.

Even in the heyday of the Academic Council, the portents of change were present. Cold winds blew out of the state capitol. Salaries, which had been low from the beginning, began to be “frozen.” At points the “freeze” lasted for as long as three years, while inflation drove the cost of living constantly higher. The promotional “quota system” increasingly choked upward mobility and began to throttle faculty morale. Ironically, this was precisely the opposite effect from that which the MBRCC had promised to Mr. Bentley on September 6, 1960. Speaking of this quota system, the Executive Director of the MBRCC had observed:

You are thus well in line ... to hold out substantial increments to outstanding faculty members who prove their abilities by meritorious performance.

Beyond the resented tendency of the state government to impose salary freezes, and the lamented inability of the MBRCC to end the quota system, there was also a growing sense of being exploited in comparison with the faculties of the state colleges and state university. Community college faculty salaries averaged far below those of their teaching colleagues in other sectors of public higher education. To make matters worse, the governing board seemed to tacitly approve of this gap. In January, 1973, for example, the MBRCC distributed throughout the system its Policy Handbook which contained this amazing statement on “standards of pay:”

It is the Board’s view that great care shall be taken in assigning salaries, keeping in mind the morale problem of other institutions of higher learning.

Against such a background, collective bargaining became inevitable. For the first thirteen years (1960-1973) it was not legally possible. But in 1973 the state legislature enacted a new law which took effect on July 1, 1974. Under this new Public Employee Collective Bargaining Act, state employees in public higher education were given the right to organize and bargain collectively for wages and other conditions of employment. Elsewhere, and even at NECC, they lost little time in taking this option. In the fall semester of 1974, NECCFA created an *ad hoc* Committee of Inquiry into Collective Bargaining. It was chaired by Professor Chet Hawrylcw and its report, made public on January 16, 1975, strongly recommended that the faculty exercise its new liberty and affiliate with some union for purposes of collective bargaining.

During the spring semester of 1975, “authorization cards” indicating a willingness to be represented for collective bargaining were circulated. Most faculty members at the college signed such a card for one of the three unions interested in the role of bargaining agent.

During the summer of 1975, just after the excitement of welcoming its new President, John R. Dimitry, Northern Essex was hit by a bolt from the blue, a state financial crisis which seemed to portend a 10% budget

cut and immediate massive layoffs. The crisis affected all agencies of state government. At Northern Essex, as elsewhere, tentative layoff lists were prepared; the trauma was deep and lasting, even though the college managed to survive the crisis without having to lay off any full-time faculty, as was actually happening at some of the other colleges in the system. Following the recommendation of the NECCFA Board of Directors, individual members sought protection by taking membership in the Massachusetts Teachers Association (MTA) and, on September 10, 1975, NECCFA as a whole voted to affiliate itself with the MTA.

Both the membership of the bargaining unit and the choice of the bargaining agent were also undetermined at that time. Membership in the unit was desired by the Division Chairpersons at Northern Essex. The state Labor Relations Commission, however, ruled them ineligible, while it allowed Department Chairpersons and Program Coordinators, as well as counselors, librarians and some other non-teaching professions to be included.

On December 18, 1975, the state Labor Relations Commission conducted an election on each campus of the state community college system and the MTA won the right to be the bargaining agent for the non-supervisory professional educators at all fifteen of the colleges. From then on, local autonomy diminished; work began on the negotiation of a contract which would impose uniform working conditions throughout the system. NECCFA itself was changed. It was no longer to be a local association of teachers, but one chapter in a statewide union which included non-teaching professionals as well. The opportunities which had existed at Northern Essex for sharing in governance were greatly diminished. Such matters as academic calendar, faculty status, and sabbatical leave could no longer be handled by committees of the Academic Council; these were now items to be negotiated with the MBRCC and incorporated into a collective bargaining agreement. Another new era was beginning.

Viewed in retrospect, the story of the faculty at NECC during the years 1961-1975, is thus an exceptionally dynamic one. The faculty grew in sheer size and also in its role within the institution. It moved from being a handful of mere employees to a well-organized body of educators with very considerable power. Within the institution, it was content; except for the outside forces, it would not have felt unionization necessary or desirable. Because of the effectiveness of both NECCFA and the Academic Council, the faculty at NECC had functioned as managers of the institution. If the famous Supreme Court decision in the later Yeshiva University case had been rendered about Northern Essex in 1975, the degree of partnership in the managerial function might well have cost the faculty its right to collective bargaining. But NECC was the exception; its Academic Council was unique and the organizing process occurred for the entire system. Idealism gave way to realism. The history of the faculty after 1975 would be far more determined from without the institution and would be far less under its own control. The original challenge had been met and the opportunity of the sixties and early seventies had been seized; discovery of the future remained.

# The Creation and Growth of DCE

In an interview on June 1, 1983, Harold Bentley was asked if he had created two colleges at NECC, the Day Division (DCE) and the Division of Continuing Education and Community Services (DCS). To this question, he replied, “No, not two colleges, but one college with two arms.” Such was the philosophy by which Northern Essex embraced its community. The community from the beginning had more educational needs than could be served exclusively in the Monday through Friday daytime hours between Labor Day and early June of any given year. It also had needs, from Newburyport in the East to Chelmsford in the West, which could not be served only at the Haverhill campus. Both the time and the place had to expand to meet those needs.

When Mr. Bentley left Worcester Junior College to launch Northern Essex on November 1, 1960, he was leaving an institution in which there were 750 students and 40 faculty members in the day division but there were 1,100 students and 80 faculty members in the evening division. He did not think of higher education as something only for the young or as something which could not happen after dusk. In one of his earliest speaking engagements in Haverhill, on November 22, 1960, he promised to apply this concept to the new college. The *Haverhill Journal* summary of that promise reported:

In addition to a general two-year course, Bentley said that the community college will attempt to enter the adult education and evening course field. He asserted that the school will be one for the community in every sense of the word.

It was only a matter of five months after the opening of the college that the first step toward redeeming this promise was taken. During its first

two years, NECC had no legal authorization to sponsor such programs, but the state Department of Education did. Hence the first evening classes held at NECC could not be officially sponsored by the college where they would meet, but were actually set up by the area supervisor of the Department of Education's Division of University Extension, Miss Agnes Finnely, in cooperation with Mr. Bentley and a member of the faculty of Haverhill High School, J. Jackson George. The courses, which began on March 6, 1962 and ran on Tuesday evenings from 7 to 9 p.m. for ten weeks, were in the following fields: Public Speaking, Spanish, Sketching and Painting, Real Estate, Investments, and Reading Improvement. The announcement in the *Haverhill Gazette* on February 12, 1962, however, made it clear that this was an initiative of the college; it was titled "College to Register for Night Courses." After describing these "adult classes," it noted that

adults who are unable to register in person on Tuesday evening may do so by telephoning Mrs. Johansen, secretary of the Community College, DR. 2-8501, or J. Jackson George, Haverhill High School, DR. 2-7747.

Implicit here were two ingredients of the ultimate success formula of DCE and CS: first, the attempt to make registration as easy as picking up a phone and secondly, the use of regular day division personnel to facilitate the program. A third ingredient, drawing on community experts to teach in the evening, was also implicit in this article, which noted that Spanish would be taught by George Calt of Haverhill High School, Real Estate by Bradford realtor Robert W. Costello, and Sketching and Painting by Francis Grose, art supervisor of the Haverhill public school system.

This cooperation with the state University Extension was approved and encouraged by the MBRCC. Tuition for such courses was then set at ten dollars per credit hour; classes would be held only if a minimum of twenty persons registered; instructors were paid at the rate of \$360 for a three-credit course.

Still, these first evening programs were the outreach of an arm of the state Department of Education rather than of NECC itself. The college merely lent a helping hand. But in doing so, it reinforced its own innate desire and determination to go beyond being just a daytime college primarily for recent high school graduates. One sign of this impulse was the decision to sponsor a summer session in 1963.

The necessary approval was secured in time for NECC to offer a summer session in 1963. A six-week program running from June 24 to August 5 was designed with sixteen different courses meeting between 8 a.m., and 12:35 p.m., five days a week. The tuition was \$18 per credit hour or \$25 per credit hour for non-residents of Massachusetts. Most of the courses met for two hours each day, an indication of the seriousness of the endeavor. The primary target audience was clearly students from NECC or other colleges who needed to "make-up" a course previously failed. The attractive brochure expressed this somewhat euphemistically by advertising "Basic college courses for credit - for college students who seek a firmer grasp of a subject."

Early in the spring of 1963, the Massachusetts state legislature enact-

ed an addition to the laws of the Commonwealth which allowed NECC the opportunity to develop its “second arm.” Chapter 15 of the General Laws (Section 39) provided that:

Each recognized community college may conduct evening classes provided such classes are operated at no expense to the Commonwealth.

The proviso, somewhat popularized to “AT NO COST TO THE COMMONWEALTH,” was almost as important as the permission given. The state, while willing to subsidize community college education in the Day Division, was unwilling to do so evenings. Any activities would have to be totally self-supporting. Continuing education would have to be run like a business; its very life would depend on being able to at least break even financially. Hence, at NECC and at some other Massachusetts community colleges, evening programs began under the direct supervision of the chief fiscal officer; when the “Evening Division” was organized in August, 1963, Milo Williams was named as its first director. For him, as for his successors in the sixties, Don Ruhl and Norman Landry, this responsibility was an “add-on” to their regular Day Division roles in the college. It would not be until 1970 that a full-time Director was hired specifically to oversee continuing education.



The first flyer of the Evening Division appeared in early September, 1963. It was a single piece of paper, with the courses (23 for credit and two without credit) listed on the front and admission and fee information on the back. The spring, 1985 DCE & CS brochure, by contrast, was a

48-page tabloid describing more than 140 credit courses and 230 special interest courses. As the college promised on that first flyer: "Other courses will be available if there is sufficient interest." Other statements on that same flyer are also of historic interest. It explained, a bit modestly: "This first year of evening sessions will offer only the first part of any regular curriculum." But it speculated (wildly?): "Second through fourth-year subjects will be offered later as the evening division develops and as all first-year prerequisites are completed." And it contained an escape clause to guard against undersubscribed courses: "The College reserves the right to withdraw any course."

The high percentage of cancellations for the first evening session did not discourage the pioneers of the Evening Division; what was not possible "at this time" became the focus of hopes and plans for the future. The 49 students of 1963 became 251 in 1965, 400 in 1967, 614 in 1969 and 910 in 1970. After the appointment of a full-time DCE staff, and after the move to the Elliott Street Campus, enrollments skyrocketed - from 1,220 in 1971 to 5,170 in 1982. The growth of DCE, in fact, was even more phenomenal than the growth of the Day Division student body. The "second arm" turned out to have an even wider reach than the first. Why? What brought these thousands of "lifelong-learners" to NECC? What made it a *community* college and not just a college for the young people of the area?



There were, of course, many reasons. They could perhaps be reduced to four big "C's": caring, creativity, convenience, and cost.

The "caring" element was a combination of personality and conviction in the people who built the division: Harold Bentley, Don Ruhl, Norman Landry, Marge Papia, Oscar Witten, John Peroni, Barbara Webber, Doris Ritter, Martha Paisner and Nancy Brown. They were optimists who

not only saw community educational needs, but who also believed that something could be done to meet those needs.

The college's caring and concern for people and the quality of their lives was expressed in the special services put in place by Don Ruhl prior to 1967 and by Norm Landry, who served as Director of the Evening Division from 1967 to 1969. In addition to its regular credit-course offerings, the division sponsored programs such as Defensive Driving, Income Tax Preparation, Local History, and Computer Applications for Private Schools.

It was a place of tremendous creativity; it explored life as well as learning. In 1970, Dorothy Patten of the *Haverhill Gazette* wrote a feature article ("NECC Expands Scope ... Again," September 9, 1970), about the expanding variety of DCE offerings. The article, based on an interview with Oscar Witten, who was the first full-time Director of DCE, mentioned new courses in fields like photography, basketball coaching, investment strategies, and ecology, as well as the opening of a new DCE campus in Lowell as evidence for this conclusion:

Full community service is the goal at Northern Essex, which has planned its programs for the personal enrichment of its students ... and ultimately that of the community.

Although poor health was to cut short Mr. Witten's contribution to NECC, his impact on DCE was enduring. He exuded intellectual and social curiosity and began to emphasize the concept of special interest courses as an appropriate activity. His enthusiasm, and his notion that the community contained many unserved groups and unmet (even unidentified) needs were to be captured and continuously developed by his successor, John Peroni. For DCE to "become all that it could be" meant that someone from the college had to go out into the community, discover its needs and wants, and then design programs to respond to those needs. It also required a great deal of freedom and a willingness to risk doing things not done before; it had to be constantly innovative, to entertain seriously even the "wildest" suggestions of ways to serve the region.

The essential freedom was somewhat built-in by the economic framework; since it was self-supporting, DCE had more autonomy than the rest of the college. It had far fewer governing board policies to adhere to than did the Day Division. It could retain its own income and even make a profit if it wished. Because of tremendous growth, it did, in fact, accumulate surplus funds, which it used as seed money to start new programs or to finance worthwhile programs which might not generate income equal to expenses. The budget growth of the division was remarkable. In 1964, for example it earned \$16,580, spent \$14,335 and had a surplus of \$2,245. Twenty years later in 1984, the three categories stood at \$1,660,473, \$1,643,424 and (total accumulated surplus) \$556,702, more than one hundred times their size at the outset!

Like its students, DCE has been a highly-motivated, hard-driving organization. Continuity of leadership has also played a key role. After serving for two years as the college registrar, John Peroni became Director of Continuing Education in 1971. Assistant Director Barbara Webber joined



the staff the same year and counselor Martha Paisner came in 1973.

Soon after they took over the helm of the division, the new team decided to shift and expand its focus. By the spring of 1972, their organization had a new name, the Division of Continuing Education and Community Services. The addition of the last three words was significant; it underscored a new emphasis on responsive service in non-academic as well as in academic areas. From then on the outreach to senior citizens, the unemployed, the disabled, and many other groups in the community received new emphasis and got translated into specific programs tailored to their special needs and interests. It was almost as if the "second arm" of NECC was itself developing a "second arm" to serve the community more fully. In addition to "Continuing Education" there would now also be "Community Services" such as Elderhostel, the Occupational Skills Center and the Gallaudet College Extension Center. Thousands of people previously not reached by Northern Essex began to come, and to return frequently, to the campus to take advantage of these expanded resources and programs.

But caring and creativity alone cannot explain the magnetism which NECC came to enjoy in the community. People also voted with their feet because of convenience and cost. They came by bus, bicycle, motorcycle and private automobile because the college was easy to get to and easy to afford.

One essential difference between the Day Division and DCE & CS is that the former had been almost totally identified with Haverhill (and since 1971 with the Elliott Street Campus in particular), while the latter has branched out all over the Merrimack Valley with a large number of satellite campuses. Should the clients have to come to the service, or should the service go to the clients? It makes quite a difference for the working adult or tired homemaker who might get involved in an evening program; a drive of more than twenty minutes can seem just too much. Recognizing this psychological factor led the Evening Division to begin offering programs away from the main campus. Courses were given in Chelmsford at the high school in the spring semester of 1970. That same fall, a number of courses were given evenings at Lowell High School. In 1971, Lawrence High School became another "NECC campus." As time went on, various other communities were added: Andover (at the Memorial Library) in 1973, Newburyport (at the YMCA Civic Center) in 1974, and Dracut (at the high school) in 1985. And within these communities, fifteen other facilities at one time or another were utilized. The Evening Division has been peripatetic, looking for the best and most convenient locations. In so doing, it certainly helped NECC to become a "communities college," almost even a "neighborhood's college." Hardly anyone in the NECC "service area" needs to travel much more than ten miles to reach higher education. Here again, practice seems to do even better than theory, when one considers that the Massachusetts community colleges were first located so that students would not have to travel more than thirty miles.

Another interesting dimension of the story of DCE, in fact, has to do with the problem of geography and the location and "rights" of other institutions, especially neighboring community colleges. When it began its evening programs in 1963, NECC was the only community college in the

field in all of northeastern Massachusetts. But its new neighbors, North Shore Community College in Beverly (founded in 1965) and Middlesex Community College in Bedford (founded in 1970) also were quick to set up evening programs, thus introducing the question of "territory." How far to the south or to the west should Northern Essex go (and how far north and east should those colleges go) in outreach? Some common planning was needed to prevent duplication of services and internecine competition. The best source of impartial coordination was, of course, the common governing board, the MBRCC. But for many years it did not formally address the questions; it simply asked the colleges to respect one another's interests. This was not always effective, and by the mid-seventies, the MBRCC found it necessary to define the "service area" of each college, in terms of "primary," and "secondary" regions. The definition even indicated that each college had a "watershed area" which might well overlap with that of an adjacent community college. Thus, over the years there were many conversations between Northern Essex and its two neighboring sister institutions over where they should open satellite campuses. Northern Essex, for example, discontinued using the Chelmsford site because of its proximity to Middlesex. As time passed, it also became important to coordinate evening offerings with other public higher education institutions such as the University of Lowell and Salem State College.

Still another factor in DCE's success has been its relative low costs. During twenty-two years of major inflation in the national economy, tuition per credit hour at NECC rose only from the original \$18 to the rate of \$40 in 1987. This modest increase is clear proof that DCE has not endeavored to become a profit-making organization through fees. Its fiscal goals have always been to generate sufficient revenue to meet operating expenses and to provide a surplus for seed money and community service programs not affordable through the Day Division budget. Hence the original basic tuition fee remained in effect for a long time, from 1963 through 1971. It was raised to \$20/credit hour in 1972, to \$25 in 1978, to \$28 in 1980, to \$33.50 in 1981, to \$35 in 1983 and to \$40 in 1984. These small increments barely kept pace with rising costs. Yet instructional salaries in DCE rose only from \$200/credit hour in 1968 to \$325/credit hour fifteen years later, in 1983. Fees and salaries for non-credit offerings were also kept very modest. In the fall of 1969, for example, one could take a 12-week course in Reading Improvement for just \$36 or in Oil Painting for \$45. During the spring of 1985, there were six-week courses in Overcoming Math Anxiety for \$20 and in Basic Drawing for \$30, just two of the many examples of an ongoing tradition of high quality at low cost.

In any consideration of cost, however, it must be remembered that DCE enjoyed a significant contribution of talent and "free labor" from the Day Division employees. If DCE were to add in to its operating costs a percentage of the time spent on it by the college President, the other deans, the division chairpersons, and many other staff members who are on the Day Division payroll, it would surely have to reflect this in higher charges for its programs.

In this regard, however, it must also be acknowledged that DCE, by means of its annual surplus, helped the total college in many important, sometimes crucial, financial ways. This was possible because the college

President has always had the responsibility and control of the DCE budget. If the Day Division budget, which depended on tightly regulated state appropriations, failed to provide for essential needs, some relief could usually be found in the DCE Trust Fund. Thus, in 1966, when the annual DCE budget was only \$66,148, President Bentley could report to the Advisory Board that DCE surplus funds of \$26,350 were being earmarked to purchase equipment "for the college." The two "arms" of NECC were coordinated by the head for the good of the whole institution. In the great financial crisis of the summer of 1975, President Dimitry was ultimately able to save the college from grave imminent damage largely by utilizing the \$200,000 DCE surplus for institutional survival and the whole college was spared from the devastation which visited some other Massachusetts community colleges at that time. Dean John Peroni, who headed the division beginning in 1970, did an incredible job of expanding its programs and services and integrating them into the total mission of the college. He modestly referred most of the credit to "the team" and continued to look to current and future challenges over past successes. It was, however, his limitless energy and long experience, his passion for innovation, and his willingness to take risks which explained much of the DCE accomplishment.

While degree and certificate programs have been the main focus of the Day Division, DCE, by its very nature, has always and increasingly looked in other directions as well. From the earliest years, it gladly accepted students who did not want to commit themselves to more than a course or two. When and if they felt ready to matriculate as a candidate for a particular degree, they could do so. The first person to complete an NECC degree program through evening study was William E. Tilley, who received his A.S. degree in the Business Management program at the college's fourth Commencement Exercises on June 12, 1966. It was the college and not the Evening Division which had the degree-granting power. That very fact helped establish the acceptance and credibility of the program; it guaranteed that content and standards would be the same whether a particular course or a whole curriculum were given in the daytime or at night. However much freedom and flexibility DCE might need and actually exercise in the non-credit area and in community service programming, it never sought or acquired autonomy with regard to credit courses or degree programs. The NECC Curriculum Committee, even before the Academic Council, exercised the power of review and recommendation on all new credit offerings for the entire college. And when the Academic Council emerged in 1970, its definition of the jurisdiction of the Curriculum Committee left no doubt that DCE was included:

This Committee shall receive and make recommendation to the Council on all proposals for changes, additions and deletions to the curricula and courses offered by the College, including all degree programs and credit courses offered by the Division of Continuing Education.

The ultimate unity of the college and DCE's integration into it can be seen in several ways. One of the most significant is the context of

graduation. There were several occasions in the seventies when a special mini-commencement was held to confer degrees on DCE students who had completed their degree or certificate programs. Now, however, there is just one annual graduation ceremony in late May or early June for the whole college. The lists of graduates do not specify whether the requirements have been met in the Day Division, in DCE, or, as frequently is the case, in a combination of the two. While this does underscore the unity of NECC's academic programs, it also means that the historian cannot say with certainty just how many students have earned their degrees through DCE & CS, but there are surely hundreds who have. The importance of the division was recognized since the early seventies by often choosing a graduate from the division each year to present one of two student addresses given at Commencement. These speakers almost never fail to inspire the audience by telling how they capitalized on their "late start" or "second chance," and how they managed to complete their educational goal while also coping with the responsibilities of family or daytime employment. "Without DCE, there'd be no degree for me" is a frequently voiced theme.

Another illustration of the one-college idea in operation relates to the payroll status of some of the workforce. During most of the seventies, the state legislature did not authorize and fund the creation of many new positions at NECC, despite its tremendous growth. Staff members had to be added and they were, but often they were paid out of DCE funding. In any given year, perhaps as many as fifteen such positions were filled. They included secretarial, staff, and administrative personnel, many of whom worked at least as much for the Day Division as for DCE itself. The Director of Public Relations, Sheila Krim, was in this category from 1975 to 1984, when it was finally possible to convert her status to the regular "01" budget account used for full-time Day Division employees. To Sheila and her long-time co-worker, Caryl Taylor, must go much of the credit for the extraordinary success of DCE in making itself and its services known. The imaginative brochures which appear several times a year to herald what DCE can do for you now are the product of their design skills. Earlier, as noted, the brochures were distributed in local stores. In 1973, Dean Peroni decided to inform the public by means of resident mailings. He was convinced that everyone in the community had a *right* to know what was available at the community college. DCE began to mail its brochures directly to occupants of all local housing. In 1985, this meant sending the brochures to each of some 250,000 households. It is estimated that each copy is seen by at least four persons. Thus, with over 1.2 million pieces being mailed annually, DCE offerings may come to public attention in nearly six million cases each year. NECC was the first Massachusetts community college to market its continuing education in this fashion; the results speak for themselves.

Many other examples could be cited to show how the "Four C's" (caring, creativity, convenience and cost) were developed as special qualities of DCE at Northern Essex. The "bottom-line" about DCE during its first twenty-two years, however, requires at least a brief discussion of a "Fifth dimension," a fifth "C," which could be identified as "climate." This too is a somewhat intangible aspect, but as important as the air we breathe. Some

outreaches are threatening or uncomfortable. The outreach of NECC's Division of Continuing Education and Community Services has been welcomed, accepted, and appreciated.

The DCE environment at NECC is something physical and also something spiritual; it is a campus and also a compass. Before 1971, the campus, as previously described, was not exactly comfortable, attractive, or inviting. DCE shared the same primitive facilities which the day division had. Particularly for evening studies, those facilities may have actually discouraged enrollments. Who would want to go out at night to a former elementary school or high school building in rather poor repair? It just didn't seem like going to "college."

When the new campus at Lake Kenoza opened in 1971, the entire college was totally transformed; as if by magic, it was no longer a make-shift setting; it could offer space, comfort, and the best of equipment and facilities. It became a magnet; where DCE had 906 students in the spring of 1971, it attracted 1,800 in the spring of 1973 and 4,678 by the fall of 1975. In that era it grew larger than the day college. As ancient Egypt was the "gift of the Nile," DCE and CS could appropriately be termed the "gift of Lake Kenoza." The intangible human desire to seek higher education in a setting which seemed a "real college" could finally be met. Since motivation is the ultimate key to all education, and especially so for adult learning, the entire region began, virtually at once, to be motivated as never before.

This change was of critical importance for two areas of DCE endeavor, special interest courses and community services. To the former it brought the needed space and ambiance for activities in the arts, crafts, and leisure-time programs. For community services, it was even more important; NECC, which before 1971, either could not accommodate community groups or at best could offer them only a minimum of very frugal hospitality, was able to invite the public to use the resources of the new campus for a multitude of social, cultural, and educational activities. It became more and more a *public* community college.

The DCE climate, however, was not enhanced just by the material exponent of the new campus. There was also another component, something hard to define, something spiritual - a mood and a spirit of sincere interest in people and their aspirations. Like the Day Division, DCE told its clients in many ways, "Yes, you can, and we are here to help you." It deliberately chose not just to enroll students, but to support, encourage and nurture people, regardless of where they were "coming from."

This basic attitude and orientation has found many different expressions over the years. The following examples can suffice to illustrate it and sum up the DCE story.

First, the division, in accepting its students, has tried to recognize the importance of the things they have previously accomplished. Long before it became fashionable or widespread for colleges to give credit for "life experiences," DCE was searching for ways to smooth the transition to higher education. In the language of the high-tech eighties, DCE was clearly "user-friendly" long before that phrase was coined.

Secondly, DCE has worked to foster mutual support to generate the same amount of cohesiveness the Day Division students developed through their clubs and student government organization, yet the "night

schoolers” did discover many common interests centering on their connection with the college. For a short time (1969-1971) they even banded together to produce their own newspaper, *The Night Owl*. Their special champion in 1969 and the advisor of their newspaper was a member of the Day Division faculty, Professor Gene Connolly. He also contributed an article to that first issue of *The Night Owl*. Writing on “What Is Education and When Should It Stop,” Gene identified both the purpose of DCE and the spirit of its students:

The Evening Division of this booming new school is the emphatic local answer to the second question. It is saying “*Never!*” Education is a forever kind of thing.

For DCE and CS, the challenges, opportunities, and discoveries have also been without limit.

# Recognition: Self-Studies and Accreditation

Much like the individual human being, a college needs a strong sense of self-worth and acceptance. Northern Essex is no exception; from the outset it has taken not just growth but constant improvement as a goal and it has desired recognition as a logical outcome. Over its first twenty-five years, NECC came a long way in this ongoing quest. It built an enviable reputation for academic strength and community service; both the institution as a whole and its particular programs have been periodically examined by objective outside experts and found to be meeting or exceeding the most rigorous of standards. When one considers that back in 1960 most people in the Commonwealth had no idea of what a community college even was, this achievement of recognized educational leadership is a truly significant phenomenon. A college can strive for excellence and for recognition in many ways and NECC has done so. Yet accreditation is the ultimate sign of accomplishing the institutional mission and thus is the principal focus of this chapter.

For the short term, NECC needed to develop confidence in itself and in its graduates. It worked at the acquisition of resources and instructional equipment; it sponsored annual “open houses” to make itself known in the community; it developed honors convocations to recognize student achievements; and it held many faculty workshops to discuss and improve instruction. It began to publish a lengthening list of colleges and universities to which its graduates had successfully transferred; in the 1966-67 catalog, this list included 34 separate institutions throughout the country. Successful transfer and the fact that its graduates did well upon transfer was a big consideration at the time. The Associate Dean of Admissions at the University of Massachusetts, Ernest W. Beals, took a special interest in students transferring from the community colleges and regularly reported on their academic progress. His findings were very encouraging. For the spring semester of 1968, for example, he reported that of 59 NECC grad-

uates enrolled at U. Mass, only six experienced dismissal due to scholastic deficiency. The group's collective grade average of 2.12 compared quite well with the all-university average of 2.37. Since the University at Amherst was the flagship institution of Massachusetts public higher education, the circulation of such evidence was influential, as was Mr. Beals' 1968 doctoral dissertation, *Academic Characteristics and Academic Success Patterns of Community College Transfer Students at the University of Massachusetts*, in causing senior colleges, private as well as public, to welcome students coming from the new community colleges.

But more than confidence was at stake; eligibility for millions in federal assistance was also in question and of utmost importance to Northern Essex, which had applied for such help to finance construction of its permanent campus. Recognition of NECC by the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare was granted specifically because "its credits are and have been accepted as if earned in an accredited institution by not fewer than three accredited institutions."

During the early and mid-sixties, NECC came to be known throughout the Merrimack Valley. There were informal strategies, such as the use of car window and bumper decals on student and staff automobiles. Yet much of the quest for recognition was based on the personal relationships which were cultivated between NECC's student services staff and their counterparts on other campuses. Don Ruhl, Church Stafford, Cecelia Furlotte, and Betty Coyne built up a network of contacts which paid rich dividends. They pressed senior colleges not just to accept NECC graduates, but also to consider granting them scholarships. For several years, there was an annual NECC "road show." Each spring a number of outstanding students about to graduate were crowded into Church Stafford's station wagon and taken around to visit admissions officers at Brandeis University, Williams College, Smith College, and Amherst College. Students such as Christine Spata, John Aung-Thwin, Robert Eddy, and Humphrey Moynihan did more than merely get accepted into the finest schools of the area, they excelled there also and thus enhanced the prospects for the NECC graduates of succeeding years.

Important as all of these developments were, the fact remained that NECC was an unaccredited college for the first eight years of its operation. Serious and specific action toward the goal of accreditation really began late in the autumn of 1968, when President Bentley, Don Ruhl and John Spurk visited with the Association's Executive Director, Ralph Burns, at the NEACSS headquarters on Beacon Hill in Boston. We were told that, despite problems with its facilities, NECC was told they should request an evaluation visit as soon as possible and, on the spot, October 5-7, 1969 was set as the definite period for it.

Shortly thereafter, the same trio visited the campus of another Massachusetts community college, one which had recently successfully gone through the self-study process. At this meeting, the host president strongly advised Mr. Bentley to keep the process tightly under his personal control and to involve as few people as possible in it. On the return trip from this meeting, a heated discussion took place about the issues of openness and participation. Somewhat uneasily, Mr. Bentley agreed to take the opposite course, to allow students, staff, faculty, and even outside consultants



to be involved. His decision was crucial for the entire subsequent history of NECC; institutional excellence became everybody's business and the search for recognition became a common cause instead of an individual pursuit. The collegiality of NECC was to be immensely strengthened by the work and the events of 1969.

On January 24, 1969, President Bentley appointed a Committee on Accreditation with the following membership: Richard B. Ellis, Alfred C. Emerson, Barbara P. Roth, Peter Simoglou, James F. Sullivan and John H. Spurr (Chairman); President Bentley and Dean Ruhl were included as *ex-officio* members. This committee was charged with collecting all necessary information and preparing a Self-Study Report which would address all items in the nine-page outline then in use by the NEACSS. The committee had only a few months to do the job. It held its first formal meeting on February 18, 1969 and its twelfth and final meeting on May 21, 1969. Since the academic organization of the college was still embryonic, a faculty coordinator was named by the committee to be responsible for the data from each of the major segments of the curriculum at that time. A high percentage of the full-time faculty came to be involved in the self-study process. Those faculty members who were not on a task force were informed of the state of the project by attendance at regular faculty meetings and Faculty Association meetings that eventful spring.

As things turned out, however, the early deadlines could not be met. Only the chapters on Objectives and Library

had been completed and reviewed when the school year ended. The Report had to be mailed back to the NEACSS by August 18 at the latest; the situation looked bleak. The Self-Study Report thus became the great challenge of the summer of 1969 for Dean of the College, Don Ruhl, Assistant to the President, Norm Landry, and its principal author, John Spurr. All of the required data was assembled; new institutional policies were written where required, an outside typist and printer were engaged. But the Faculty Association Committee took no vacation. It met in marathon sessions (such as the 8 p.m. - 1 a.m. meeting of Friday, July 25) in which the main body of the Report was read and suggestions proposed. The entire direct cost of the Report

## NORTHERN ESSEX COMMUNITY COLLEGE

HAVERHILL, MASSACHUSETTS

### EVALUATION REPORT



1969

was under \$3,000; much of it was a “labor of love” and voluntary effort. When President Bentley returned in August from a sojourn in England, he found the project completed. The decision in favor of a team effort had proven a wise one.

The NECC Evaluation Report of 1969 was a landmark document which served several purposes. Primarily, it furnished the data and information called for by the regional accrediting agency. It described what the college had been since its founding and its status in the fall of 1969. There was little either in the way of self-appraisal or projection of the institution's future. It contained many elements which were new to NECC: policies, procedures, and organization. It brought many previously separate threads together into a unified fabric. Most important, it succeeded in its primary aim: to convince the visiting evaluation team and the NEACSS that Northern Essex was a sound institution and worthy of full membership. To this day, it remains the single best source of information about the college as a whole during the decade of the sixties.

The actual three-day visit of the NEACSS evaluation team took place, as planned, on October 5-7, 1969. In a special edition of the student Public Relations Board flyer, *The Happening*, of September 29, 1969, it was appropriately billed as the “The Event of the Year.” There were four evaluators, one of whom represented the National League for Nursing. The college's then new Nursing Program was to be evaluated simultaneously with the institution as a whole. There is an interesting contrast between this first evaluation and the reaccreditation process in 1980, when NECC prepared not only a 165-page report on the institution as a whole, but simultaneously also produced separate reports on the Nursing Program, Day Component (289 pages), the Nursing Program, Evening Component (308 pages) and the Medical Record Technology Program (265 pages)! Self-study was to become an ever-more detailed and complicated (as well as expensive) process. The first NECC experience was much simpler: they came, they saw, and we conquered - all in short order. The report of the evaluation team was sent to Northern Essex just a few weeks after the visit. It listed twelve institutional “strengths” and ten “weaknesses;” many of these items have been previously cited. It also included fourteen specific “recommendations” for the college to consider as means of improving itself. It was what it was intended to be: a fair, balanced, and eminently useful critique. When the NECC staff reviewed it, they felt justifiable pride as well as a sense of challenge for further development.

For most of the next decade, however, the college was able to “do its own things” without reference to external review. It moved ahead along many new fronts and buttressed its own sense of effectiveness by constant expansion; it had the strength and confidence of adolescence; it received many tributes from its traditional clients and it sought out new groups to serve: women, the educationally disadvantaged, the non-native English speaking, the physically disabled, and senior citizens. Almost before it knew it, its “license” approached expiration and it had to repeat the process of a complete checkup.

The Northern Essex which was to be evaluated in 1980 was a very different institution from the NECC of 1969. It had a new President, a new team of administrative leadership, new collective bargaining units for

employees (including the faculty), an emerging new governing board, vastly expanded programs and services, and thousands of more students. It had changed; so had the process of accreditation. The nine-page set of standards used in the sixties was replaced in 1979 by a new New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) self-study outline of 54 pages. It required the college not only to describe what it wanted to accomplish and how it was going about it, but simultaneously to appraise its own effectiveness in every area and to go further and make specific projections as to future activity all across the board. The length of the visit was extended to four days and the size of the evaluating team was more than doubled.

Plans for the second self-study process were made in the fall of 1978 and action on it began in December of that year. President Dimitry named a Self-Study Committee of twenty members including two students, one from the Day Division and one from DCE. All major academic and administrative components were represented; there was also an individual representative of the Faculty Association. Once again the Committee was chaired by "accreditor in residence" John Spurk. The Self-Study Committee held the first of its three-hour-long sessions on December 20, 1978; the fortieth and final meeting took place almost two years later, on October 25, 1980. Each committee member, and many others throughout the college community, spent many hours developing, discussing, and interpreting the pertinent data. Careful records of the entire process were provided and maintained by an inspiring secretary, Cathy Adams, an NECC graduate and the first supervisor of the Secretarial Support Center. The correspondence, agendas, draft reports, and housekeeping records of the Self-Study Committee are probably more voluminous than all of the institutional records for the first five years of the life of the college. The Committee minutes alone are several hundred pages in length.

One ingredient of the second self-study which had not been possible in 1969 was the input of the Academic Council. The Faculty Association had its own specific representative on the committee which Dr. Dimitry had appointed. More important, the entire professional staff and the student body were sure that the draft response of the institution would be reviewed, altered, and adopted in Academic Council meetings. It was also widely known that the Self-Study Committee had set up its nine major task forces (relating to the major divisions of the report) in such a way that no one was eligible to write about his or her own area of responsibility. This principle was adopted at the outset (January 8, 1979) in order to ensure a maximum of objectivity. It allowed "non-experts" to question and challenge everything about the college and it thus turned the whole process into a genuine learning experience and a unique opportunity for change. It demanded a strong emphasis on planning. Just prior to the beginning of the Self-Study, in 1978, NECC became the first community college in the state to develop an institutional Master Plan, with both short-term and long-range goals established for a five-year period. These goals, voluntarily and internally developed, were comprehensive and specific; there were goals for each major component of the college; the fulfillment of such goals was appropriately delegated and was to become an essential criterion for measuring the effectiveness of both the organizational components and the institution as a whole. Here, as it had in the areas of affirmative ac-

tion, faculty participation in governance, and budget enhancement, NECC pioneered and provided an approach soon to be common to all state public higher education.

To compress a long and intricate tale, the Self-Study of 1978-80 was another landmark in the history of NECC. It resulted in another major institutional document, the *Self-Study Report 1980*. Using that Report as their basis, a New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) team of six members, came to NECC for a four-day visit, October 19-22, 1980. In its report, this evaluating team complimented NECC on its "exceptional frankness." It said it had "encountered an excellent college with excel-

lent personnel." This twenty-eight page report on NECC was, in essence, a tribute to the work which had been done since 1969. But it was not mere praise or an invitation to complacency, even though it resulted in NECC's reaccreditation for another maximum period of ten years. In 1980, as in 1969, the visiting team identified areas of outstanding institutional performance; it listed 12 specific "Strengths." But it also noted 13 "Concerns," and it offered five "Recommendations and Suggestions," which it urged the college to consider for action.

The tremendous importance which NECC placed on its reaccreditation was registered not only in its efforts to prepare for and learn from the actual experience, but even more by what it did when the visit was over and all the ink had dried on the many pages of self-appraisal and outside analysis. All members of the college community received copies of the findings. Action began at once to follow through on the process. President Dimitry gave a new meaning to institutional maturity when, in January of 1981, he created a new advisory unit for the college, a Committee for Institutional Change (CIC), to oversee the implementation of the many constructive ideas which had come out of the Self-Study Report and the findings of the NEASC representatives. This new unit, soon called the "kick" committee, became another important college-wide agent in the quest for maintaining and expanding excellence. Significantly, its initial eighteen members were a group of college employees mainly other than those who had served



on the accreditation committee. It also included representatives from two segments often ignored in collegiate affairs, the clerical and maintenance staffs. CIC gave an opportunity for more than 70 college employees to join in the effort for constant improvement of all aspects of the college. CIC lived up to its name; it served as a living "suggestion box," it recommended many things and many of its suggestions have been adopted; change has become an institutional way of life. Indeed, the discovery that change is part and parcel of NECC's vitality, that it is to be embraced rather than resisted, is now solidly established as the single most important benefit and legacy of the two great watersheds created by the events of 1969 and 1980.

Since the 1980 reorganization of public higher education in Massachusetts, there has also been instituted a process of curriculum review by the new governing authority, the Board of Regents. Each year NECC does an in-depth study of several academic programs and provides the Regents and Higher Education Coordinating Council (HECC) with a Program Review Report. Fortunately, reorganization has also resulted in a new consciousness of self-worth for the individual institutions. In a state where many private colleges and universities had long held the limelights of excellence and appreciation, this new atmosphere could become an important factor for schools like Northern Essex. In December of 1984, when three NECC employees (Eugene Connolly, Dolores Haritos and Olga Williams) were honored by the Commonwealth for outstanding public service, many of their co-workers felt and expressed the sentiment, "It's about time."

Viewed over a time span of twenty-five years, NECC has kept up this dual effort to be as good as it can be and to obtain deserved recognition. Nineteen days before taking over the helm of Northern Essex, President Dimitry wrote an article which appeared in the *Haverhill Gazette* on June 10, 1975. It was captioned "Building More Perfect Community Ultimate Aim of Northern Essex." In it, he stated his philosophy of what a community college can and should be:

A community college has one fundamental and ultimate aim: to use its institutional resources toward the construction of a more perfect community ... (it) must always remind itself that the community is the essential owner of the college. The college must understand that it serves the community as a form of community investment in itself.

These are aristocratic principles which suggest that democracy means the leveling-up of society through the education of the people. They are ambitious principles and they have been constantly reaffirmed by the college. After four years on the job, Dr. Dimitry expressed the same idea in different words. Writing in the *Report of the President* (October, 1979), he summed up "the state of the college" as follows:

The college is committed to continuing academic excellence, to continuing response to the community, to continuing self-evaluation, and to continuing existence as a major contributor to the quality of life in the Merrimack Valley.

### A Permanent Campus: Elliott Street

NECC spent its first ten years in old and temporary quarters; it begged, borrowed, or rented spaces in addition to the quickly outgrown Greenleaf School on Chadwick Street in Bradford. In September, 1971, the college moved to the spacious, permanent facility nestled aesthetically in a scenic landscape of 110 acres overlooking Kenoza Lake. It seemed as if a long, trying pilgrimage were over.

The Elliott Street Campus has been the main embodiment of the college during the period since 1971. In this chapter, an overview is taken of the historic setting, the physical environment, the design, financing and construction, the utilization, maintenance, adaptation, and improvement of the main campus. Altogether, these elements represent another part of the quest for excellence. Without claiming to be the most magnificent community college facility in the world, NECC can justifiably assert that its Haverhill Campus is an exceptionally attractive and functional setting for the realization of its educational mission. It is a campus which epitomizes the dream of the American people to create the finest of bases for society's most important work, the maximum development of individual citizens.

The governing board, the MBRCC, was the agent with the statutory power of submitting requests for capital outlay to the state government. It had to choose among the new community colleges as to which it would select for the early construction of a permanent campus. When it met on November 28, 1962, the MBRCC decided to make Mass Bay Community College its top priority and to seek planning money for Mass Bay in fiscal year 1964 and construction funding for it in fiscal 1965. Northern Essex was scheduled for planning money in fiscal 1966 and construction funding in fiscal 1967.

But in August, 1963, Mr. Bentley discovered that Cape Cod Community College, which had opened in Hyannis in 1961, had already received

a grant of land for a new campus in West Barnstable and had been able to convert “renovation money” for the Hyannis site into funding for new campus planning. Not wishing to be overleaped in this wise, the NECC President went into action. He met twice in September, 1963, with the local Chamber of Commerce, which had done so much to secure the college in the first place. Then, on September 20, 1963, he arranged a meeting between local legislators and MBRCC representative, John Costello. The acquisition of a new site for NECC was termed “urgent” during this meeting. Next, Mr. Bentley enlisted the support of his Regional Advisory Board, which met on October 1. On a motion prompted by RAB member and Bradford Junior College President, Dorothy Bell, the group went on record as favoring “the idea that the college should be in the Haverhill area.” Speed was deemed essential not only because of the hopes and needs of the other colleges in the system, but also to get in on the “ground floor” of a new federal assistance program, the Higher Education Facilities Act of 1963, under which 40 percent of new campus costs could be provided by the Federal Government.

Haverhill was the best choice for three reasons. First the entire Advisory Board had already taken a position and on its *ad hoc* committee, one member was from Methuen and another was from Lawrence. Secondly, Interstate Route 495 was under construction at the time; its passage through Haverhill was to enhance the convenience of commuting throughout the lower Merrimack Valley and also to influence the ultimate choice of the new campus site. The third, and decisive, factor was that Haverhill soon came up with an offer too good to be refused. The site search committee was taken by City Manager Ginty to look at several possible locations in October and November. One site visited was in the Mount Washington area of Haverhill, another was an attractive parcel on Salem Street in Bradford, the third was Hunkin’s Hill, adjacent to Kenoza Lake, a parcel of exquisite natural beauty just off Interstate 495. The search committee was absolutely thrilled at the last possibility; it exceeded their wildest hopes. John Costello of the MBRCC came up from Boston, viewed the site, and quickly agreed that it was ideal. On December 17, 1963, the selection was announced to the public (and to the landowners concerned) in the headlines of the *Haverhill Gazette*. The city was offering 110 acres of choice privately-owned land, which it proposed to take by eminent domain and then sell for \$1 to the Commonwealth for the college.

The state government also moved quickly on the project. A capital outlay appropriation of \$288,000 for campus design was made as early as July 1, 1964. The state Commissioner of Administration and Finance was immediately asked by the MBRCC to appoint an architect so that initial planning could begin on a campus designed for 1,600 students and with a target occupancy date of September, 1967. Three months passed without action. Then on October 29, Haverhill State Representative Edward S. “Scotty” Morrow called the Commissioner’s office and on the next day, October 30, 1964, Commissioner William A. Waldron announced the architect for NECC would be Edward J. Tedesco Associates of Winchester.

The selection of Edward J. Tedesco Associates was a piece of great good fortune for NECC. Not only was its staff of the highest training and professional caliber, but its founder, Edward J. Tedesco, took a personal

interest in the project. His delightful humanism and keen sense of aesthetics and landscape perspective were brought to the project and account for much of the visual pleasure which the finished product would afford. Perhaps as important, he immediately struck up a lasting friendship with President Bentley; their shared characteristic of seeking only the best was more than a personal bond; it became a joint effort to express the spirit of a community college in stone, metal, and glass. Before drawing the first line of the first sketch for the campus, Mr. Tedesco took pains to study what the college was and wanted to become, and what the Kenoza Lake neighborhood was and wanted to remain. There was a respect, almost a reverence, which Mr. Tedesco held for education and a joy, almost an ecstasy, which Mr. Bentley had in architecture. None of the hassles which normally attend an agent-client relationship ever came up between them; they sensed being partners in progress.



The year 1965 was Haverhill's 325th anniversary year. The donation of the Northern Essex site was to be the city's major commemorative gift to itself and to posterity. But the actual transfer of the deed was threatened



when legal opinion was voiced that the city would have to get some “considerations” in exchange. The only possible material consideration was the return of the renovated Greenleaf School. But the college still needed that facility and would continue to need it until the new campus was built and ready for occupancy. What could Mr. Bentley offer in exchange? The best he could do was a promise that the college would deed the Greenleaf back to Haverhill as soon as possible. This was acceptable and plans were made for the deed transfer ceremony early in 1965. The principal participants in the historic ceremony on February 23, 1965 were Chamber of Commerce representatives Nicholas Peterson and Lawrence J. Ewing, Jr., Representative Francis J. Bevilacqua, Senator James P. Rurak, MBRCC President William G. Dwyer, 325th Anniversary Committee members Mrs. Bram S. Pickens and City Councilor Edward M. Nordengren, and Mayor Paul I. Chase, who presented the deed to President Bentley. Mayor Chase was to have an even larger stake in the future of NECC than most city residents: six of his children have been NECC students and he himself enrolled in the evening Business Management program in 1968 and became an NECC alumnus at the June 1972 commencement ceremonies held, for the first time, on the new campus.

Having both a deed and an architect, the college now began to look for money. Mr. Tedesco crammed a year's work into a few months', and by May 12, 1965 had a set of preliminary plans finished and approved by the Bureau of Buildings and Construction (BBC) and MBRCC. In the meantime, the Executive Director of the Chamber of Commerce, Malcolm F. Fryer, had written (on April 1) a “Dear John” letter to Governor Volpe. This appeal read in part:

To my knowledge, we are the only such school in the State ready for expansion that has the land ready and, in addition, has been granted full planning money, based on the expectation of construction this year.

We now understand that the matter rests entirely in your hands and ... depends on your including it in the capital outlay program now.

Perhaps Governor Volpe did not imagine that the plans could be drawn up as quickly as they were. In any case, he submitted his capital outlay program for FY1966 to the legislature on May 10, just two days before the plans were completed. His request for \$52 million for capital outlay made no provision for building at NECC. The Phase I construction plans at this point were for site development, seven buildings, and furnishings at a projected cost of \$6,976,760; Phase II plans, promised for the fall of 1965, were to detail two more buildings at a total cost of \$2,502,000.

Local legislators were dismayed not to find NECC on the Governor's list of projects. Both Representative Bevilacqua and Senator Rurak quickly announced that they would ask the legislature to amend the Governor's request when the bill came up before the respective Ways and Means Committees of the House and Senate.

On May 21, 1965, the *Haverhill Gazette* did its part to protest the omis-

sion. Its editorial of that day, "Attention, Governor Volpe" laid the matter squarely on the line:

Bridges and highways are important, but much more important for Greater Haverhill is the proper development of Northern Essex Community College.

Just four days later, the Governor was in the area to speak to 700 employees at Western Electric in North Andover and he affirmed that he would "enthusiastically endorse" the Northern Essex project when plans for it were complete. A few weeks later, Senator Rurak met Governor Volpe in a State House elevator, told him that the plans were indeed complete for Phase I and that he had introduced an amendment in the Senate Ways and Means Committee for \$500,000 worth of site development funding for Northern Essex, which the Governor agreed to approve if it reached his desk. The Great and General Court, however, did not move too fast that year. Senator Rurak's amendment was not adopted by Senate Ways and Means until November 5 and it still had to be approved by a joint House-Senate conference committee. The amendment survived the conference committee and was sent on December 7, 1965, by the legislature to the Governor as part of a 63.4 million dollar capital outlay budget for fiscal year 1966, by then nearly half over. True to his word, Governor Volpe approved the item two days later, on December 9.

While this struggle for Massachusetts funding was going on, there was a simultaneous effort to secure a major federal contribution to the project. This effort was somewhat easier. During the summer of 1965, the governing board, the MBRCC, decided to make Northern Essex its only candidate that year for the 2.5 million federal dollars available for construction for junior/community colleges in Massachusetts. The Board, in effect, opted to put all of its eggs in one basket, rather than to submit several competing proposals. This decision was another piece of great good luck for the college. The system by then consisted of nine community colleges, all of which needed a permanent home. Northern Essex simply got there first with the most and the best and the Board wisely recognized this and resisted the temptation to reduce its chances for funding by submitting more than one proposal.

The NECC application for federal funding was completed and mailed to Washington on December 6, 1965. On June 8, 1966, the College Facilities Grants Branch of the U.S. Department of Health Education and Welfare (Office of Education) announced a grant award to NECC of \$2,531,150 for the first phase of the new campus project, for which the total estimate was \$8,570,382. The college received a flurry of local congratulations as well as messages from Senator Edward M. Kennedy (who had addressed the NECC student body that year) and Congressman William Bates, in whose memory the bridge from Groveland to Haverhill, over which thousands have since come to the Haverhill campus, was later renamed.

Naturally, when the site was chosen for the college, serious and legitimate concerns were voiced about possible detrimental impact on the environment. The greatest care had to be taken to prevent such an impact.

The creation of an elaborate independent sewage system and the prevention of any runoff or seepage into the lake were special challenges to the design engineers, and caused considerable delay. City officials monitored the design carefully and granted construction permits only after being fully satisfied that all of the technical solutions would be correct, lasting and effective. The same concern for the protection of Kenoza Lake was to reappear in the early eighties, when the college wanted to have the upper campus parking lot paved. Fear of the runoff of water and automobile-related chemicals caused extended study of the problem and long delay in the project. A proposed safeguard was the installation of a "retention pond" on the college side of Kenoza Street, a feature which could further enhance the beauty of the campus. The situation still underscores the college's determination that progress should not in any way disrupt the natural setting.



The year 1967 saw collaboration intensify and the tranquility of the site temporarily end. On March 6, Governor Volpe held a meeting at his office in the State House. The purpose was to "expedite" the NECC construction project, which as yet had no tangible reality. His instructions to "move as quickly as possible" soon bore fruit. In April, the state Bureau of Building Construction announced that it would advertise for bids on site development in the near future. On July 27, the Bureau announced that it was awarding a contract for the construction of roadways, parking areas, and utility sites to the C and M Construction Company of South Lincoln, the low bidder for the job. On the following day, Harold Bentley went to Boston to sign this first contract. Within a week, an army of trucks, bulldozers, and earthmoving equipment arrived and went to work. The actual

groundbreaking took place on August 5; the ceremonial ground breaking had to wait two months until early October.

The state of the construction was heralded with a more formal observance on October 3, 1967, when silver shovels were wielded in ceremonial groundbreaking by Governor Volpe, President Bentley, Mayor Chase, Senator Rurak, and H. Louis Farmer. Members of the Regional Advisory Board, the legislature, the MBRCC, the local business community, the media, the faculty, staff, and student body were on hand for the ceremony and speeches of the day. Governor Volpe used the occasion to recall the tremendous progress made since 1961 by the community colleges in the state and to predict a great impact for Northern Essex on the economic vitality of the region. Professor Roland Kimball characterized President Bentley's role by taking a quote from the poet Edwin Markham, "At the center of the cyclone, there is a place of central calm." The nine and ten o'clock classes were cancelled on that day so that students and family could attend. The Student Council President, John G. Santos, talked about the affection students had felt toward the Greenleaf School and their enthusiasm about participating in the historic event:

That building made our dreams come true. Our gratitude radiates in 100 different directions throughout the Commonwealth.

The most memorable of the nine one and one-half minute speeches made that day, however, came from Senator Rurak, who reminded all present of the essential reason for the ceremony. The new campus, he affirmed, was not being built for President Johnson, nor for Governor Volpe, nor for the city of Haverhill, nor even for President Bentley and his faculty and staff; it was being built to serve the students and the people of the region. Only on such a foundation could it hope to rise.

The task of site development revealed three unexpected obstacles. First, because the land had earlier been a golf course, extra topsoil was found in great quantity; it impeded getting down to bedrock. The contractor solved this problem simply by making several large mounds of the excess earth. Thus the campus ended up with some "mini-hills" which were not there originally. This was actually an advantage; it gave the campus a more rolling terrain; when finally landscaped, these gentle slopes helped to soften the rectangular lines of the buildings.

Secondly, the site preparation crew ran into a large area of peat along the lower end of the campus on Kenoza Street. To develop the right base for the gymnasium building and athletic fields, much of the peat had to be excavated and trucked away. Legal questions arose as to the value (if any) of the peat and the cost and manner of its removal. The peat problem was effectively resolved by appropriate state supervisory agencies and resulted only in minor delays in the site preparation work.

A third, more serious, obstacle arose when the city of Haverhill, anxious to ensure maximum protection for Kenoza Lake, decided to relocate part of Kenoza Street by setting it back further from the lakeshore. At the time of the groundbreaking, Kenoza Street, from the westerly end of Elliott Street, hugged the lake shore very closely all the way to the end of the tract which had been deeded to the Commonwealth for Northern Essex.

After numerous conferences, proposals, and counterproposals, a compromise plan was worked out: four of the original 110 acres would be deeded back to the City of Haverhill to allow it to relocate the street.

In that era of skyrocketing inflation, every delay meant significant cost increases. This became apparent in the summer of 1968, when bids were invited on the building project itself. The call for bids went out during the summer and the bids were opened in mid-September. The lowest bid received was \$3.6 million more than the \$9 million which the legislature had appropriated to fund the entire project. The incumbent state Attorney General, Elliot Richardson, ruled in early October that no construction contract could be awarded until the full amount was made available by the legislature, which by then had adjourned for the rest of the year. Site development was complete but construction was held in abeyance. Early in 1969, Senator Rurak filed legislation to add \$3.3 million to the NECC capital outlay already reserved. The federal Office of Education helped his effort by threatening to revoke its 1966 grant of \$2.5 million unless positive action on the project was quickly forthcoming. The Rurak bill was



quickly approved in both branches of the legislature and it was signed by Governor Francis W. Sargent on April 8, 1969. The project was then divided into two phases and the call for bids went out again in June. In August, a contract for Phase I was awarded to the Franchi Company of Newton, which agreed to construct the first four buildings (library, science, applied science, and general classroom) at a cost of \$7,485,000. The work began at once.

In February, 1970, the state announced the awarding of another contract to the D.Guschov Company of Boston, which agreed to build the gymnasium building for \$1,859,000. The same firm was selected in March,

1971 to construct the Student Union building, later designated as the “College Center,” for \$1,967,300. The maintenance building was constructed under a \$284,000 contract awarded to the Walsh Construction Company of Salem in February, 1973. The building of the Elliott Street campus was divided up among three different firms. There were four separate contracts for the buildings themselves and three additional contracts (for initial site development, for sewage lift and storm drainage systems, and for final site work and landscaping). The total cost to the Commonwealth is difficult to trace, but it approximated \$16 million, since the original funding of nearly \$13 million did not provide for furnishings or equipment, which required



a separate appropriation of \$2.3 million included as part of Governor Sargent's Fiscal Year 1972 capital outlay budget. Two Republican governors thus played major roles in realizing the long-range vision which Democrat Foster Furcolo had projected in the late fifties.

Although the buildings were constructed by three different firms, the campus was able to preserve its essential integrity because of other factors. Edward J. Tedesco Associates retained control of all design features and closely supervised the quality of actual construction. There was also continuity of personnel assigned to the project by the state Bureau of Building Construction, one of whose officials, Ronald Sevigny, was hired by the college in 1970 to be its Superintendent of Buildings and Grounds, a post he was to fill until 1984.

The nucleus of the new campus was two years in the making. As academic year 1971-72 approached, it became clear that NECC would have more than two thousand students, that it could no longer survive in its temporary quarters of the first decade, and that occupancy of the new campus was imperative, even though the construction was not scheduled to be complete until the end of October, 1971. Record admissions and a

very human impatience combined to produce the decision to open classes at the new campus in September, 1971, "ready or not." And so, on the morning of September 15, 1971, just two days behind on the academic calendar, some 2,300 students converged on the new campus to make it their own. Between 7:30 and 8:00 a.m. on that warm, sunny day, a tremendous traffic jam developed on Route 110 and the streets leading into the campus; it took all morning to unsnarl. Once they got out of their vehicles, the students roamed around to explore their new home. They found four buildings open for business: the gym, the science building, the applied science building, and the classroom building (later to be named Liberal Arts). The library looked finished from the outside, but was not to open until November. The President's Office and Business Office were still in Bradford. The Dean of the College and the Dean of Students were temporarily located in the classroom building. The huge structures still had the aroma of drying masonry and paint. The furniture, in classrooms and offices, was perhaps the only familiar feature; none of the new furnishings had arrived, so they sat in the same chairs which had previously been used at Chadwick and Summer Streets. Many of the students commented on how nice it was to have large expanses of parking space and not to have to worry any more about being ticketed for parking violations on the Haverhill streets surrounding the "old" campus. Only a few even noticed that the parking areas were not paved or that there was no soap in the restrooms. It was, on the whole, a euphoric atmosphere, even though the landscaping was ragged and the air thick with dust from construction still in progress.

Man of vision though he was, Mr. Bentley simply had no inkling of the headaches which lurked ahead; the parking lot problem was soon to become a monumental disaster for anyone venturing into the new campus, as well as a gigantic source of embarrassment. The unpredictability of New England winters came into play. Instead of "going by the book" and providing a nice solid ground freeze, the winter of 1971-72 was exceptionally wet and warm; the earth froze, thawed, refroze, and rethawed almost weekly. By mid-November the *Observer* was aware of the coming trouble; it ran an article entitled "Mud Pies." On November 30, the image was "Parking Pollution." First the "hard gravel" and soon everything else began to submerge in a deepening morass of mud. Local towing companies made a fortune that winter. By early March, serious thought had to be given to closing the campus for the rest of the year. Incredible pictures of cars sunk into mud almost up to their door handles appeared in local newspapers. The building maintenance crews waged a valiant rear-guard action against the ooze tracked in by every person who tried to arrive for classes. Emergency funding was obtained and, during the spring vacation, truckloads of gravel were spread over the ugly brown sea of ruts. This measure, and a mercifully dry spring enabled the year to continue to its appointed conclusion. That summer, the lots were paved, and from then on, the only way to "sink" at NECC was academically.

The first three years (1971-1974) in the new home were a time of settling in for Northern Essex. There were many ideas on how the new facility could best be used. For example, there were student proposals that a co-op student-run filling station be installed and that parts of the campus should be flooded in the winter to provide a public ice-skating area. Nei-

ther of these ideas materialized. But three more buildings were finished: the Library in November, 1971, the Maintenance Building in 1972, and the College Center in November, 1973. Only an additional classroom building on the quadrangle in front of the gym and a combination administration building-fine arts center remained on the drawing board as Phase II of the campus construction. However, after 1974, the MBRCC looked to the needs of other colleges in the system. The finances of the Commonwealth also worsened and reduced the availability of money for capital outlay projects. NECC was considered one of the “haves” and the limited available funding went elsewhere.

The utilization of the new campus also was a process of experimentation and discovery. Offices were repeatedly shifted both within and between buildings; space was needed and assigned for new academic programs; the athletic facilities and the College Center began to draw thousands of area residents wanting to use the beautiful new community resource for recreation and social events. The new home put a new emphasis on the word “community” in the college name. All that remained to be done was to hold a public pageant to celebrate the inauguration of the new facility.

This event, Dedication Day, was held on May 10, 1974. The students, faculty and staff were joined by more than five hundred friends of the college and local and state officials for a program which turned out to have two focal points. It was a day to honor Harold Bentley, who saw the unveiling of a bronze plaque naming the Learning Resource Center building for him and who also heard himself “roasted” at a gala luncheon. But it was even more of an occasion to symbolize all that had been accomplished since 1960 and to reflect on the future of the college in its new home.

Even without the realization of Phase II, the NECC campus was impressive. In the winter of 1974, a photographic display of it received national recognition for excellence of design at a joint meeting of the American Institute of Architects and the American Association of School Administrators held in Atlantic City, New Jersey. The display was subsequently exhibited at





the National Association of Secondary School Principals Convention in Brussels, Belgium and in a special exhibit which traveled around the world under the auspices of the United States Information Agency. It cannot be documented, but these international tours may account for the significant rise of foreign students for whom NECC was also to become “home” in the years ahead.

Just a little more than a year after Dedication Day, responsibility for the campus, as for all other aspects of the college, passed from Harold Bentley to John Dimitry. From 1975-1985, the physical changes were more subtle and less dramatic, but also substantive and important. Essentially, the decade from 1975 on, was an era of physical conservation and enhancement. The campus in 1985 was more attractive and more functional than it was before. With a new spacious facility, what needed to be done and what was done?

The most obvious need was to eliminate a problem which appeared virtually as soon as the new campus opened: roofs leaked. Everywhere one looked, there were galvanized trash barrels collecting the water which seeped down from rain and melting snow. Corridors were obstacle courses, and the ceilings gaped open, with large sheets of plastic protruding to guide the runoff into the barrels. Efforts to seal the roofs from the outside proved ineffective; experts recommended the complete reroofing of the buildings. It took years of requests before the state provided money for the job. In the winter of 1985, the project was nearly completed, as the Gymnasium building became the fifth structure to be re-covered and, with the rain barrels finally all removed, NECC was free at last from the unwanted moisture and its unsightly countermeasures.

A second need arose as the student population grew: additional parking. Plans were made in 1977 to accommodate more cars by opening a new parking lot on the northwest corner of the campus. There was no money to pave this area, so it was simply put into use with just a gravel surface. It soon acquired the nickname “the Mudflats,” even though it never remotely approached the boggy conditions which in 1971-72 had generated that epithet for the main student parking area in front of C Building. This upper campus lot, in fact, is much used. It provides a pleasant walk down to the buildings in the quadrangle. Those using it cross over a charming wooden footbridge across the swale. It is a much shorter and more scenic walk than that taken in the sixties when students had to park either in Bradford or “uptown” and traverse the Bradford Bridge across the Merrimack River to get from one class to another.

Afar more critical need was the adaptation of the new campus to render it fully accessible to persons with physical disabilities. The community college could only effectively have an “open door” for those with physical disabilities if it became truly “barrier-free.” As early as 1973, on the initiative of Counselor Betty Coyne, Northern Essex hosted the first meeting of postsecondary institutions in Massachusetts to discuss needs in this area. The importance of the issue was dramatized when a courageous NECC student, paraplegic Vietnam veteran Richard LaFontaine, accompanied by a number of friends in the then very active Veterans’ Club, rode in his wheelchair to the flagpole area, took down the national flag and solemnly promised to return it to college officials only after the architectural

barriers were removed. Action resulted: more than \$400,000 was expended to install access ramps, an elevator, wheelchair accessible restrooms, telephones, and other features enabling the disabled to have easier access. By the early eighties, the campus was nearly 100% barrier-free and the college received state and national recognition for its achievements. Mr. LaFontaine kept his promise, too. In a special ceremony dedicating the new elevator system in B and E buildings on September 29, 1977, he came back to the campus and returned the flag to President Dimitry as a symbol of appreciation for the progress made on behalf of the disabled. His own academic career at NECC was itself eloquent testimony that his constituency was in reality the "differently abled:" despite having to be assisted on the stairways, he had completed all requirements for the Liberal Arts degree in a two-year period (1974-76) and had graduated *with honors*. More important, he had proven once again that dedicated individuals do make a difference and can help bring about change, if the institution is a responsive one.

Other improvements of that decade included the acquisition and installation of state-of-the-art equipment for technical programs and computer applications; the finishing and conversion of large general storage areas into instructional or office space; the carrying out, by grant-funded artists, of internal embellishments (murals, mosaics and stained glass creations through the campus); and an ongoing program of further landscaping, which added attractive trees, flowering shrubs, and flower beds to the already picturesque site.

Despite all of these improvements, the campus soon proved to be too small. The total design was intended to accommodate 3,000 students, but without the final two buildings planned for Phase II, the facility was only adequate for 2,200 students. Even during the first year of occupancy, that number was exceeded. Throughout the seventies and eighties, with Day Division enrollments of over 3,000 students, the ideal ratio was exceeded by some 50%. Efforts were continually made to get state approval for at least one of those two buildings, namely the Administration and Fine Arts Center. Three times the legislature recommended planning money for that purpose, and all three times the incumbent Governor vetoed such an appropriation, even though a very strong case for the building was presented. The college was thus unable to open a much-needed day care facility; it had to utilize more and more space in the Learning Resource Center for administrative purposes; it could not provide other than makeshift facilities for its art, music and theatre courses; the local community was still without a place for large audience events. The late seventies and early eighties were simply an inauspicious time; from 1981 to 1984, the college received absolutely nothing in capital outlay appropriation, despite having clearly shown that it had the heaviest client usage of all the community colleges in the state (one FTE student per each 119 square feet, while the system average was one FTE student per each 170 square feet). NECC made the long and painful discovery that a Fine Arts Center/Administration Building on the campus just did not appear to be a top priority at the state level.

But the college had a treasured permanent home at the Elliott Street campus and it was hoping to discover that the home could be enlarged to accommodate present challenges and future opportunities.

### New Programs: 1971-1985

As an earlier chapter has described, the development of academic programs at NECC during the sixties was gradual, cautious and essentially restricted by the physical facilities available. It was a time for putting down solid foundations concerning curriculum content and the process of curriculum change. Those foundations have proven enduring. With the exception of the General Liberal Arts program, all of the degree programs offered prior to 1970 were still to be found in the 1982-1984 catalogs.

The contrast between what Northern Essex could offer in 1970 and what it did offer in 1985 is striking when one looks at school publications of the two eras. The 1968-1970 catalogs, for example, described 10 associate degree programs, no certificate programs, and a total of 144 distinct credit courses. The 1982-1984 catalogs listed 34 associate degree programs, 6 certificate programs and 485 distinct credit courses.

In the small space of the current chapter, it is impossible to provide a detailed analysis of each curriculum change as it occurred, or even to mention all of the individuals who contributed to the program evolution; that would require a whole new specific treatise and would be a long and worthy project. For present purposes, it must suffice to provide only the major trends and general directions which have emerged. What were the new educational opportunities available to students in 1985 which were unavailable in 1970 and how did such opportunities come about?

The most obvious feature of curriculum development just after 1970 was NECC's decision to move ahead in the areas of the health professions and human services. Two new academic divisions emerged and new associate degree programs were designed and implemented as follows:

#### Division Of Human Services

Criminal Justice (1971)  
Early Childhood Education (1971)  
Educational Assistant (1971)  
Mental Health Technology (1972)  
Fire Protection and Safety (1976)  
Gerontology (1976)  
Educational Assistant, Language  
Communication Option (1977)  
Interpreter Training (1977)

#### Division Of Health Professions

Respiratory Therapy (1971)  
Radiologic Technology (1971)  
Evening Nursing Program (1973)  
Nursing Home Administration (1973)  
Dietary Technology (1976)

Thus, in six years, the two new divisions had created more new programs than the entire college had in its first ten years. The enthusiasm and energy of the respective division chairpersons, William Taglianetti and Paul Bevilacqua, were both prolific and contagious. The same six-year period also witnessed the introduction of nine other new associate degree programs under the aegis of divisions which had existed earlier. The Division of Engineering and Technical Studies, chaired by James F. Sullivan, introduced the program in Environmental Technology in 1973. Under the leadership of Alfred C. Emerson, the Division of Business and Office Education also moved quickly to utilize the new campus fully with new offerings:

Executive Secretarial: Legal Option (1971)  
Executive Secretarial: Technical Option (1971)  
Executive Secretarial: Medical Option (1971)  
Executive Secretarial: Accounting Option (1973)  
Administrative Assistant (1974)  
Administrative Assistant: Education Option (1974)  
Banking (1975)  
Food Service Management (1975)

During this very productive six-year period, NECC also began to offer one-year courses of specialized study which would provide immediate access for graduates into particular job markets. These “regular certificate” programs were devised for the following areas:

Respiratory Therapy (1971)  
Health Facility Activity Director (1973)  
Gerontology (1976)  
Mental Health: Community Residence Management (1977)  
Security (1977)  
Interpreter Training (1977)  
Educational Assistant: Language Communication Aide (1977)

Two major results emerged from this era of intense program creativity: NECC attracted more and more students and the balance between liberal

arts education and career preparation became reversed. As late as 1973, nearly two-thirds of the students were in the Liberal Arts program and only one-third in occupational programs. By 1975, the numbers were approximately even, and by 1979 nearly two-thirds of the enrollment was in occupational programs.

The period from 1978 to 1985 saw NECC searching energetically for new strategies to obtain needed resources, discovering them and continuing to make many important additions to its curriculum. In terms of new Associate Degree Programs, these seven years saw the following new programs implemented:

- Library Associate (1978)
- Computer Maintenance (1980)
- Business Management: Retailing (1980)
- Administrative Assistant: Shorthand (1980)
- Administrative Assistant: Accounting (1980)
- Administrative Assistant: General Business (1980)
- Word Processing/Information Management (1980)
- Executive Secretarial: Spanish Bilingual (1980)
- Chemical Technology (1981)
- Business Management: Data Processing (1981)
- Computer Technology: Business Programming (1981)
- Computer Technology: Computer Science (1981)
- Word Processing Technology and Management (1982)
- Paralegal Studies (1982)
- Nursing-12 Month Option (1984)

During the same interval, the college also introduced two new formats under the umbrella of the Liberal Arts program: the “degree concentration” (e.g., in Gerontology and in Physical Education/Recreation) and its smaller version, the “course concentration,” which created a wide variety of opportunities for students to pursue particular fields in considerable depth while still preserving the wide exposure of the Liberal Arts program in which both new formats were housed. For many years, the Liberal Arts program had been cooperatively managed by two divisions (Mathematics and Natural Sciences and Liberal Arts). After 1977, it was the common concern of three divisions (Social Sciences, Humanities and Communications, and Mathematics, Science and Technology). Under the leadership of Robert McDonald, Corinne Grise, Charles Reilly, Usha Sellers and Chet Hawrylcw, these three divisions collaborated to enrich the Liberal Arts program by setting up course concentrations in the following areas:

- Social Work (1979)
- Theater (1979)
- Town Management (1979)
- Journalism/Film/Broadcasting (1979)
- Dance (1980), Music (1980)
- Biology/ Pre-Veterinary/Pre-Medical (1980)

Chemistry/Chemical Engineering/ Plastics Technology (1980)  
Earth Science (1980)  
Environmental Science (1980)  
Physics (1980)  
Women's Studies (1982)  
Creative Arts (1982)  
Commercial Art (1984)  
History (1984)  
Political Science (1984)

Together with NECC's longstanding provision of Special Topics courses and Directed Studies courses, all these new offerings pointed to the flexibility and vitality of the Liberal Arts program as it responded to a changing world and to growing student interest in subject-matter specialization as a key to future careers. Since the degree and course concentrations could be adopted without any external approval process, they could be created quickly and easily, whereas new associate degree programs required authorization by the governing board, the Board of Regents.

After 1977, there was also a rapid growth of one-year regular certificate programs:

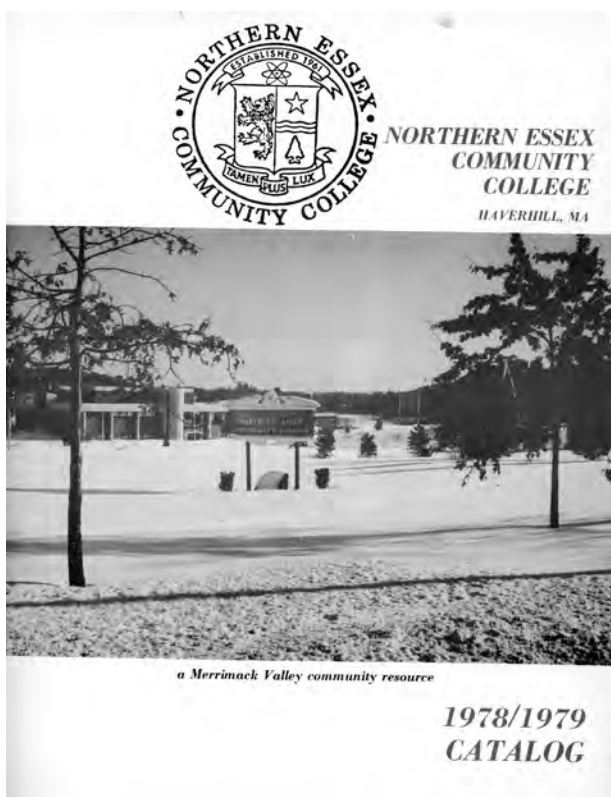
Library Assistant (1978)  
Medical Transcriptionist (1982)  
Computer Servicing (1983)  
Alcohol/Drug Abuse Counseling (1983)  
Medical Terminology and Transcribing (1983)  
Robotics Technology (1983)  
Information Management (1983)  
Materials Management (1983)  
Office Skills (1983)  
Dental Assistant (1984)  
Practical Nurse (1984)  
Tumor Registry (1984)  
Banking Studies (1984)  
Commercial Art (1984)  
Computer Aided Drafting (1984)  
Quality Assurance (1984)  
Paralegal (1984).

As the foregoing lists of curriculum innovations reveal, the major emphases after 1977 were in the areas of technology and business rather than health and human services. The total curriculum was dynamic, but Corinne Grise and Olga Williams, with the input and support of the faculty of their respective divisions, seemed to have an inexhaustible supply of new ways to keep the offerings current and to respond to the rapid changes of the world beyond the campus. A few of the new ventures (e.g., Library Science, Fire Protection and Safety, and Dietary Technology) proved to be

short-lived and were rather quickly phased out. But the vast majority of the new programs are addressing sizeable and long-term educational needs. That outcome was due partly to vision and partly to process.

For many years prior to 1971, the MBRCC and its Educational Policies Committee had consistently encouraged the community colleges to

stress career programs rather than transfer programs. That advice, generally not followed for roughly a decade, coincides pretty closely with what actually developed after 1975, perhaps because the younger, degree-oriented student body of the sixties changed to an older, more job-oriented student body later on. Among the younger male students, the end of the draft (and hence of academic deferment) may have contributed to this change in orientation and life strategy. Another factor which stimulated occupational programming after 1971 was a gradual turnaround in public perception of



the value of job-oriented education. Internally, NECC had the advantage of substantial continuity in the academic leadership which devised and implemented the new programs. From 1975-1985, the academic course of the college was charted by President John R. Dimitry, whose constant philosophy was focused on program expansion, comprehensiveness, and responsiveness to the needs of the regional economy. He recognized the critical importance of manpower training, the opportunities of the federal CETA and JPTA programs, and the need for greatly expanded remedial and developmental education. He also pointed out the absolute necessity of seeking new resources, particularly federal grants, to accomplish these aims. With his encouragement of internal research and development and his cultivation of significant ties to the local business and industrial communities, President Dimitry became an effective catalyst for constant program innovations.

Below the presidential level, there was also a remarkable continuity of leadership. Dean of the College Donald Ruhl continued to guide academic expansion until mid-1978. After his departure, Division Chairman Robert

E. McDonald became Dean of Academic Affairs. Both of these leaders had the benefit of long and able help in the successive Assistant Deans: Brent Bonah, Sheila Shively, John Spurk, and Mary Prunty. As noted earlier, there was also a tradition of continuity in the key roles of the Division Chairpersons. Almost totally, the academic leadership at NECC came from within its own faculty and from individuals with long experience in the college. The same benefit accrued from the work of the Curriculum Committee and its five dedicated chairpersons during the interval from 1971 to 1985: Wynne Bascom, Michael Pelletier, Donald Pailles, Bruce Earnley, and Priscilla Bellairs. Only a very few proposals ever “made it” through the NECC Curriculum Committee without some healthy debate or amendments. And like Harold Bentley, President Dimitry never vetoed or ignored the Committee’s recommendations. The new programs are very much a result of a conscious process of partnership.



Northern Essex has also seen the building of its programs encouraged and supported by the review authorities “above:” the MBRCC until 1981 and, since then, the college’s own Board of Trustees, and the Board of Regents, and later the Higher Education Coordinating Council. Two examples can illustrate the contribution of the MBRCC to the recent development of NECC’s programs. For most of its first fifteen years, NECC (like any other community college in Massachusetts) was limited in its access to occupational education because both the jurisdiction and the state and federal funding for it were entrusted to the state Board of Education. In May, 1977, that agency and the MBRCC came to a landmark agreement called the *Joint Policy on Occupational Education*. This first formal agree-



ment by the two boards created mechanisms for collaboration among the Commonwealth's general high schools, regional vocational-technical high schools, and community colleges. In the case of NECC, it expanded the avenues of cooperation, joint programming, and resource sharing with the secondary schools which the college had already been developing with some of them, most notably the Greater Lawrence and Greater Lowell Regional Vocational Technical High Schools. The *Joint Policy* made it possible for NECC to begin receiving substantially enhanced federal funding for occupational programs under the provisions of the Vocational Education Act of 1976 and Chapter 622 of the laws of the Commonwealth. Moreover, it pointed to the need to increase access to higher education for groups previously under-represented: minorities, limited English speaking, the disabled, and female students in occupational education. It also contained strong endorsements of certain other principles which NECC already was including in the development of its programs: counseling and employment guidance, academic support services, use of community resources, participation in economic development efforts, "lifelong learning," in-service education, and the recognition of knowledge and skills acquired outside the classroom.

In 1981, the MBRCC was phased out of existence and responsibility for all public higher education in the state was delegated by law to the Massachusetts Board of Regents, which from the outset took that responsibility very seriously and which, in consequence, became a major factor in the life of NECC. It centralized and coordinated the planning of all new programs; it mandated a periodic evaluation and reporting on all existing programs. It created a climate which encouraged the expansion of academic services. It established educational priorities and was able to deliver the necessary funding for new initiatives. It generated a comprehensive, systematic approach which, in total, was far better and more rational than the politically-influenced fragmentation of the earlier history of public higher education in the state. Its role, as well as that of the local Board of Trustees created by the same 1980 legislation, is considered specifically in a later chapter.

The Regents' impact on NECC's curriculum was immense primarily because of its ultimate control of the institutional budget. Until 1982, NECC had always suffered from its very efficiency. It was an exceptionally "lean" college trying to do a colossal task with relatively meager resources. The establishment of the Board of Regents gave the college an opportunity to request that its budgets be set with a more favorable balance between the mission assigned and the resources provided. In April of 1982, President Dimitry took bold advantage of this opportunity. He addressed a polite but powerful message to the Regents documenting the historic under-funding of NECC and urging the adoption of a new basis for determining funding allocations. The results of this appeal were dramatic. For Fiscal Years 1983, 1984, and 1985, NECC was granted budget increases which enabled it to implement many of the new offerings as well as to finally have effective support for many of its previously unfunded or underfunded traditional services. A combination of patience and bluntness brought about this change. President Dimitry's ringing challenge to the Board of Regents ("NORTHERN ESSEX COMMUNITY COLLEGE

CANNOT CONTINUE TO DO MORE WITH LESS”) created a clear and positive crossroads in the life of the institution.

There were many other important academic innovations at Northern Essex during the period 1971-1985: a program of Cooperative Education was launched and developed; important first steps were taken with regard to International Studies and gender balance in the curriculum; federal and private grants for instruction were sought and obtained; a unified Academic Support Center for students needing developmental help in reading, writing, and mathematics was created, equipped, staffed and constantly expanded; the largest ESL (English as a Second Language) program among Massachusetts community colleges was established and nurtured; computer literacy for students was addressed; “capstone (2 plus 2) agreements” were reached with a number of public and private senior institutions of higher education. The whole college was dynamic and it becomes literally impossible to give adequate space and credit to all of these developments and to the individuals concerned with them. They, and their students, know how these many dreams, visions, and efforts have been translated into educational benefits. Thus, this segment on the new academic programs of the era 1971-1985 can appropriately conclude with an unabashedly incomplete recognition of some of the key contributors to these major themes. As in a great symphony orchestra, the contributions of each musician are essential to the power and harmony of the ensemble. Some of the program music of NECC was arranged and performed as follows:

Cooperative Education: Jack Wysong, Abbott Rice, Deborah Scire

International Studies: John Guarino, Corinne Grise, Elizabeth Wilcoxson, Bonnie Flythe, Usha Sellers.

Balanced Curriculum: Eleanor Hope-McCarthy, Linda Kraus, Selma Singer, Priscilla Bellairs, Mary Prunty.

Academic Grant Catalysts: Norman Landry, Jack Wysong, Mary Wilson, Stephen Brown, Thomas Fallon, Wendy Shaffer, Mary Prunty.

Academic Support Services: Patricia McDermott, Sheila Shively, Dale Midgley, Kenneth Smith, Edward Korza, James Ortiz, Eric Branscomb, Patricia Belmont, Nancy McLaughlin Nickerson, Cheryl Finklestein, Patricia Carver, David Kelley, Penny Kelley, Eugene Wintner.

English as a Second Language (ESL): Sandra Fotinos, Diane Chin, Alan Hislop.

Computer Literacy: Michael Pelletier, Ann Salvage

Curriculum Records: Sandy Lambert, Priscilla Bellairs, Mary Prunty.

Many other unnamed players contributed to the symphony as well. Composer John Dimitry and conductors Donald Ruhl and Robert McDonald would be the first to acknowledge the success of the orchestra as a unit and the invaluable role of each individual in it.

# Meeting the Needs of the Nontraditional Student

When Northern Essex opened for classes in September, 1961, it was a college of “traditional” students. The students were “traditional” in that they were immediate or recent high school graduates in the 18-22 age bracket. Except for ethnic background and religious affiliation, they were a rather homogeneous group. Within their own families and neighborhoods, however, many of them were “nontraditional” in choosing to undertake higher education rather than seeking a job right out of high school.

By 1985, the students in the corridors, classrooms and lounges of Northern Essex were strikingly diverse. People in wheelchairs thread their determined way through throngs of newly arrived immigrants from Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and the Hispanic world. They brush elbows, compare notes, and make friends with silver-haired retirees and salt-and-pepper haired persons beginning college programs in mid-life. Yet not all of the diversity is quite so visible; the fifty full-time students who are deaf are not an obvious component of the “non-traditional” segment. Neither are the more than 1,500 students who currently make use each semester of the developmental services offered by the Academic Support Center.

What has happened, in effect, is that the groups once considered “nontraditional” have become the majority, the norm. NECC still attracts and serves the recent high school graduate, but it has also made dramatic and effective outreach to other people in the region. The special funding, activities, and services put in place to assist these groups have enriched the institution as a whole.

Viewed historically, most of this development has occurred after 1970. Although there has been considerable overlapping of philosophy, personnel, and resources, several major focal points can be identified: The Discovery Program, ESL (English as a Second Language), Veterans Affairs, Part-time Studies, Services to Senior Citizens, Programming for

Women, Services for Students with Disabilities, and the evolution of academic support services. This chapter recalls some of the highlights of each of these areas and their separate and combined impact in the evolution of the college as a whole.

During its first nine years of operation, Northern Essex had come to discover that not all its students were “traditional.” Many experienced academic difficulties and personal adjustment problems. Some suffered from dyslexia or other obstacles to reading; some had phobias about math; others had trouble with oral or written expression; many lacked basic study skills; some lacked motivation or self-confidence; some seemed to have a combination of most, if not all, of these roadblocks to learning.

One of the dreams of those early years was for the college to find, attract, and serve “nontraditional” students. At the time, this vision was mainly about hopes to include members of the African American community and persons from the culturally diverse and economically disadvantaged segments of the regional society. NECC longed for an opportunity to do something positive in this regard and there was much discussion of how to keep the college from acquiring an attitude of educational gentrification. Such discussion led to the adoption, on April 10, 1969, of a set of college objectives, one of which expressed the following commitment:

To arouse the public interest and engender public support of post-secondary education; in particular, to initiate to higher education those who by economic or sociological disadvantage have previously been unaware of the possibilities around them.

## Discovery

At just about the same time, the MERCC began seriously to promote developmental education in the Massachusetts community colleges. It approached the state Department of Education and received a grant of approximately \$400,000 for Disadvantaged Student Programs. This amount, which remained constant for nearly a decade, was to be divided among those community colleges which were prepared to offer such programs. The Discovery Program was designed in 1970 while the college was still in its temporary facilities and was implemented on a pilot basis in the spring semester of 1971 with thirty-six students recruited with the help of social agencies within the Merrimack Valley. For the next thirteen years, “Discovery” was to be a small-in-size, large-in-meaning part of the NECC outreach effort. Some indications of the new ground it was to break were revealed in a news story in the *Haverhill Gazette* of February 11, 1971. Captioned “Northern Essex Gets Funds to Educate Disadvantaged,” the report noted several significant innovative features of the new program:

1. The reliance on self-discovery.
2. Its individualized pace: “The student progresses at his own pace toward the ability to make a decisive choice about his future plans: college study, vocational training, or immediate job placement.”
3. An integrated team-taught curriculum of four courses with heavy

- reliance on tutorial sessions, learning laboratories, programmed materials and other new (for NECC) instructional strategies.
4. Targeting of concerns which the college had not until then seriously addressed: "Occupational area description seminars, job placement counseling, student self-evaluation and program evaluation will proceed regularly throughout the program."

In the fall semester of 1971, Discovery moved, with the rest of the college, to the new campus. It had one large classroom and its own lounge for informal "rap" sessions. There was never a problem recruiting the fifty students who could be accommodated by the funding grant, which remained constant at about \$40,000 per year throughout the life of the program. That very small amount was barely able to cover the built-in financial benefits to the students and the cost of program administration. Costs for materials and supplies, physical overhead and, above all, for counseling and instructional salaries, were donated from the chronically lean college budget. The commitment was redeemed by generous institutional support. The staff involved with Discovery chose to be involved in the program and their enthusiasm was equaled only by their dedication. Some, like Reading Specialist Patty McDermott and Counselor Ken Smith, were with the program for many years from its inception. Others took time out from their accustomed responsibilities to coordinate or work in the program for shorter periods. It involved risking: team-teaching, interdisciplinary subject matter, and intense personal interest in the students. It was nurturing as well as educating and the demands were heavy.

At a Discovery reunion luncheon in June, 1983, President Dimitry noted that this dedicated group had not only furnished many of NECC's academic leaders, but that collectively it had been "the most influential group in the entire institution." In fact, from 1975 on, the President kept raising the question of how the "cluster concept" which worked so well for the Discovery students could be applied to assist 1,100 or more students each semester. Could the sense of family, the spirit of personal concern, be kept alive if the developmental effort was so dramatically expanded? And where would the money come from? These challenges would require time and patient effort.

For Discovery itself, the years wound on. More than 1,200 students experienced its encouraging atmosphere where one learned about potential, growth and the need, like that of the turtle, to "stick one's neck out" in order to make personal progress. Many of those students shared and learned to cope with the problems they had known: prison and parole, broken homes or physical abuse, dependence on drugs, drink or welfare, insect infestation and dilapidated housing. One Discovery student talked about having to study under a streetlamp.

For any skeptical reader who might suspect that the foregoing is more poetry than hard fact, a brief description of the luncheon of June 8, 1983 is essential. The idea of holding a reunion did not come "from above." It was proposed by Discovery alumna Donna Raymond of Methuen as a capstone to her determination that in celebrating its silver anniversary, the College should not forget what Discovery had been and meant. She not only organized the luncheon and assembled a photo album of Discovery

highlights and people, but also sent out and tabulated a two-page questionnaire to several hundred former Discovery students. The questionnaire dealt with educational backgrounds and results. It showed that more than one-fourth of the Discovery students entered the program with less than a tenth-grade education, that nearly eighty percent completed the program, and that more than eighty percent of these continued their education, either at NECC or elsewhere, beyond Discovery.

But the best wine came at the end of the questionnaire, in a space which invited personal comments. Almost all respondents took the time to record their feelings. Their personal notes are one of the most moving sets of testimony to the human enrichment which any college could hope to provide. Excerpts from a few are given here to suggest the intensity of the responses:

“I entered the Discovery Program with hidden fears and overwhelming doubts about myself, and thought I would fail ... I am now a respiratory therapist ... Discovery, thank you for showing me the way to find *me!*” (38-year-old woman)

“It was for me an experience of transformation.” (high school “dropout”)

“I was like a boat floating aimlessly ... I did great my first semester with the help of these people.” (young man out of school for three years) “I have had the rare opportunity of living a *New Life*. I now work as a professional counselor . . . It gave me a *Second Chance* in life.” (former automobile mechanic)

Such testimonials about the personal impact which Northern Essex has had on its students come into the college from time to time from graduates of all programs. The sense of appreciation and gratitude has not been limited only to the “nontraditional” group or, within that segment, only to former Discovery students. Still, these comments from the heart are a faithful mirror of the special spirit which emanated particularly from the presence on campus of the Discovery Program. Its ultimate meaning to Northern Essex was more affective than cognitive. For many years, each time a new group of Discovery students gathered for their first get-acquainted and orientation meeting, they heard Ken Smith give his famous “Snowflake Speech.” It was about the unique delicacy and beauty of every human being, and it was persuasive: that was the real and basic discovery, both for the students and for the college.

## ESL

In 1982, the NECC day division student body of 3,597 people included 196 members of ethnic minority groups. In academic year 1984-1985, with an almost identical student body of 3,601, there were 497 minority students. One major reason was funding which allowed the establishment in January, 1985 of the Lawrence Education-Employment Project (LEEP), the most effective outreach effort to the minority community in the history of the college. One of the largest groups to benefit from it was

the Hispanic population of Lawrence; one of its major components was instruction in English as a Second Language (ESL), a NECC service with its own long and fascinating history. The link between ESL and effective service to minority students was very direct and obvious. In 1983-1984, the ESL program had 203 students, in 1984-1985 it had 372. Most minority students were native speakers of a language other than English; their doors to education and social mobility would open only with the key of language competency in English.

Before joining the faculty of NECC in 1966, Professor Sandra Fotinos was already very aware of the many ways in which language problems could impede both education and adjustment to American society. She had taught English as a foreign language in both Greece and Germany. Her husband, Xenophon, was a Greek immigrant who wanted to succeed in his new homeland. What he needed, along with thousands of others in the region, was not “English as a *Foreign Language*,” but “English as a *Second Language*,” that is, a language to be learned and used while living in the American milieu. Xenophon was able, in time, to overcome both language and cultural barriers. But what about all those others who did not happen to have a Sandra Fotinos in their own household? From 1966 to 1971, while teaching a full schedule of courses in Speech, Literature, and English Composition, she began to plan an ESL program.

In the summer of 1972, Sandra mentioned her idea to a new college staff member, Barbara Webber, the Assistant Director of the Division of Continuing Education and Community Services. Could NECC offer ESL to a group of Haverhill residents who belonged to the Spanish Center on Winter Street, which had been set up by Saint James Parish to help its growing Hispanic community? DCE was flexible and positive. And so, in the autumn of 1972, a group of non-English speakers from Haverhill (recruited by visits to their homes) began to meet weekday evenings to study ESL with Sandra and some volunteer tutors. One of these tutors was Tina Carver, wife of Professor Barry Carver, then of NECC’s Computer Science program. ESL began as a “family affair.” Mrs. Carver and Mrs. Fotinos were to be colleagues for many years, and to co-author two ESL textbooks for the Prentice-Hall publishing house, where Tina Carver became the chief English as a Foreign Language editor. Before moving to Prentice-Hall, Mrs. Carver served as the coordinator of the evening ESL program from 1974-1978. The local program was to break new ground along many fronts; community colleges, including NECC, did more throughout the country to serve ESL needs than any other segment of higher education.

In any case, this first offering (which moved in mid-semester to the facilities of the Haverhill Public Library) had 31 students. It was a “non-credit” course, but the students had more compelling motivation: they did not want to continue being “locked out” of the paths to social and economic mobility. Sandra and Barbara also visited the Adult Basic Education Center in Lawrence to discuss ESL with its organizer and director, Fred Samia, Sr. Mr. Samia, a journalist for the *Lawrence Eagle Tribune* and an educator, had been working with Lawrence immigrants since 1933 and in 1965 had set up the center, which he directed until his retirement in 1979.

For the Day Division, the ESL need was proven through the Discovery Program, which, in one of its first semesters, had a bit inadvertently accepted three young students from Venezuela, who were completely lost in their classes because they just could not follow the language. Sheila Shively approached Sandra Fotinos about some help for them. They, along with a student from Hong Kong, were given special tutoring.

In general, the ESL students (approximately eight out of ten) have come to NECC from residences in Greater Lawrence. They were nearly equally divided between men and women. In ethnic origin, the largest group has been from the Dominican Republic, with sizeable other groups coming from Iran, Lebanon, Korea, Greece, Italy and Poland. At one point (1978-80), there were more than 50 Iranian students on the campus because of the closing, through bankruptcy, of two private colleges in New Hampshire which had earlier accepted them (and their money) for study. Because of the Iranian revolution and the subsequent seizure of the American Embassy in Tehran and the long, traumatic ordeal of the hostage crisis of 1980, many of those students had to live through a time of hostility against their native culture. To the credit of NECC and its Dean of Students, Churchill Stafford, there were no incidents of reprisal against these Iranian students.

The first Day Division ESL classes at NECC began, on an experimental basis, in the fall semester of 1973. They met for fifteen hours per week and carried no academic credits. The instructor, Sandra Fotinos, was simultaneously teaching three courses in the English Department. The salary for a tutor and funds to purchase tapes were provided by the Division of Continuing Education.

In the spring semester of 1974, a second level, ESL II, offered as a Special Topics course by the Department of Foreign Languages and carrying three academic credits, was added. This addition went far to establish ESL as a legitimate academic offering. Subsequent semesters witnessed the introduction of two advanced level courses, ESL III and ESL IV, so that a comprehensive ESL program evolved and by 1974, a student could earn up to twelve credits in the program. Certificates of completion were awarded to those who successfully finished each of the levels. These certificates were often useful to the students in searching for employment or upon return to their native lands.

There was always some debate about how much credit should be given for ESL study (as there is for all forms of developmental education). The ESL program was virtually recreated each academic year during the seventies; it was custom-tailored to the current student population and it reached a point where as many as 18 credits could be earned. For both financial reasons and reasons of academic standards, a major revision of the program was carried out in 1980. The first two levels became non-credit bearing and their intensity was increased from 15 to 25 hours per week. The two advanced levels became semi-intensive, meeting seven hours per week for three credits at each level. Students were not allowed to register for courses outside of the program until they had reached the competency of the advanced levels. This revision proved to be realistic and workable over a long term.

In the eighties, ESL expanded its community service with less empha-



sis on foreign students and more emphasis on outreach to the non-English speakers of the Merrimack Valley. It is interesting that DCE & CS, which had launched ESL at the college, was not only able to save it from financial trouble, but also to give it a more systematic basis, expand its staff and vastly increase its outreach. The refinement of the program, was recognized as a regional and national model, and was facilitated by the Chairman of the Division of Instructional Development, David Kelley. Dr. Kelley, however, is quick to point out that Alan Hislop, a linguist whose repertoire includes seven foreign languages, designed and implemented most of the change and growth of the program.

As suggested above, ESL had been an intensive experience for students; even so, it sometimes takes as long as five years for them to reach the level of skill they need in order to function effectively both in society and in higher education. The introduction of microcomputers and ESL software (much of it designed by Sandra Fotinos) into the program is one possible way of making progress faster and easier for the students.

The program was also very labor-intensive for those teaching it. Mrs. Fotinos, for example, frequently put in an 80-hour workweek. She had to have a "long cord" added to the phone in her kitchen at home, because ESL students always seemed to need academic or personal help right at supertime. Despite these demands, Sandra was also able to play a vital role in ESL education beyond Northern Essex. In 1982, she was one of the founders of the Massachusetts ESL Community College Association (MECCA). She served as the chairperson of this association which brings together representatives of the eleven ESL programs offered in Massachusetts community college, which have done more for ESL education than either the state four-year colleges or the state universities.

While the program has been *intensive* on both sides of the desk, it has also been *extensive* in a number of ways. In the seventies, it reached out, for example to disadvantaged women in the federal WIN program; for two years (1978-80) it operated on the campus of the University of Lowell in a pioneering instance of institutional partnership and resource-sharing; it also extended beyond the ESL classrooms into the life of the college as a whole by reviving NECC's International Club. This club, which Mrs. Fotinos guided as faculty advisor, sponsored almost every year, a number of fests and festivals to celebrate the richness and diversity of cultures from around the globe. With food, music, dance, and a variety of speakers and demonstrations, it gave the campus many opportunities to learn about and enjoy places and peoples beyond the local area. In the spring of 1985, when the NECC student body launched its "Feed the World Week," the largest fundraiser was the ethnic foods brought in and sold by students in the ESL program. The small "seed program" begun in 1972 had taken root, flourished and was bearing both educational and human nourishment. Through its ESL offerings, the college was better able to understand and act upon the discovery that, indeed, "We Are The World."

## Veterans

Another major segment of the world of "nontraditional students" at the college was the large group of veterans of service in the armed forces

of the United States. A graph of veterans' enrollment from 1970-1985 would show 700 in 1970-1971, a peak of 1,250 in 1975-76 and a tapering off to 600 by 1984-85. Who were the "vets" who constituted such a large part of the student body (in some years almost one-third of it) and in what ways were they, too, nontraditional students with special needs?

In some ways, the veterans were hard to perceive as a distinct group. They were not always visibly much older than the general student population. Unlike the students in Discovery or ESL, they were not grouped in any particular curriculum. In practice, they took their place alongside other students throughout the campus. There was no special support service available to them until the creation, in 1973, of the Office of Veterans Services, which ran on federal funding until 1981 when it temporarily closed. To some extent, this was because many veterans did not choose to wear their service on their arms; they preferred to blend in as part of the whole. That at least was true until the late sixties, when large numbers of veterans began to come home from Vietnam. But "Coming Home" from that conflict was not easy. Scorn, suspicion, resentment, and fear of the "warrior" accompanied the collective national frustration and guilt over what was taking place in Southeast Asia.

Northern Essex had been the scene of numerous anti-war and anti-draft protests and demonstrations. Could it now find a place for those who had volunteered or accepted induction into that ill-starred experience? More importantly, would it be ready to put balm on their psychic, emotional, and spiritual wounds? There were great risks for all concerned.

Prior to 1973, veterans' concerns were handled principally by Counselor and Financial Aid Director Susan Horowitz, as part of her larger college responsibilities. Dean of Students Church Stafford and other counselors and faculty helped as needed. But by the early seventies, the numbers and special needs were becoming very large and demanded more focused attention. Late in that year, NECC was able to advertise for a veterans' specialist to join the college on a six-month appointment funded by the new federal Veterans' Cost of Instruction Program (VCIP).

By the end of 1973, that coordinator had been hired and had set up shop in the basement of the LRC, which was still known as the "Library." He was himself a veteran, John R. "Dick" Reilly of Malden, and an experienced counselor. His "six months" was ultimately to become eight years of help and advocacy for NECC vets. Perhaps advantageously, Dick Reilly never was to become part of the state-funded staff. That allowed him to be a strong advocate, but it had the disadvantage that, at the end of each year, he was never sure if the office would be kept going in the following year. Veterans' services became a learning experience for all concerned. For the counselor, Dick Reilly, it began as soon as he arrived on campus and was given his "basic training in the Vietnam vet" by Doug Sheehan, Frank Jenkins, and other Vietnam vets, who quickly became his "A-Team." They felt like outcasts trying to get into the mainstream, into the "system." They persuaded Dick to join them in making a bus trip to Washington, D.C. to participate in "Project Apple," a national demonstration in the capital being organized by the Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW) to demand increased benefits and assistance for the Vietnam vets. There was a real need to persuade the federal government that it ought to do more

than just fly people back from Saigon or DaNang to California and issue them a train ticket home. Project Apple helped to meet that need.

The NECC vets came back to the campus from this trip to Washington and coalesced into a powerful interest group. They established a Veterans' Club at NECC and very quickly became a focal point and resource to vets throughout the region and the state. They helped to organize veterans at U. Mass, Amherst, U. Mass, Boston, U. Mass, Dartmouth, and on other campuses.

Veterans' benefits in the early seventies were the responsibility of several governmental agencies at several levels. Federally, the Veterans' Administration (VA) had the general responsibility, while the then Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW) had charge of the VCIP program. State agencies, such as the Department of Veterans' Services and the then Division of Employment Security were also involved, together with their local or regional branch offices. Private agencies, such as the American Red Cross, American Legion, and Disabled American Veterans, were another component of available assistance. Despite all of this structure, the process of veterans' readjustment to civilian life was not going smoothly. Veterans felt themselves the victims of red tape, long delays, and bureaucratic run-arounds. This all changed at NECC when Dick Reilly began to make outreach efforts on their behalf and to push the governmental structure into effective delivery of services and benefits, instead of getting tangled up in jurisdictional disputes, duplication of effort, and consequent frustration of the veterans' claims, needs, and desires for help and support. The first order of business was to make veterans aware of their opportunities and of the fact that NECC was open to them and ready to really help them. Many of them had come home traumatized and were simply trying to forget by walking in the woods of Colorado or New Hampshire. Others were looking for jobs at a time when the state and regional economies were in depression. Many were just sitting around waiting for something - anything - to happen for them. Their fears, uncertainties, and inertia were ultimately classified as the "post-Vietnam syndrome," "or more commonly, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).



Beginning in the spring of 1974, NECC went out to them. They were informed of their benefits (and of the college) through newspaper ads, notices on local and Boston radio stations, the standard college publications, and personal visits to the offices of every veterans' organization in the region. Everywhere he visited, Dick Reilly left a supply of a special 18-page veterans' brochure called "Find the Answer" which he had made up and Sheila Krim designed with the utmost clarity and welcoming tone. As so often happens in life, tone and climate were everything: these outreaches were fantastically and immediately successful. The number of vets at NECC rose by 300 that year and by another 400 the following year. By 1975-1976, Veterans constituted nearly one-third of the Day Division enrollment.

Of the thousands of vets who did "Find the Answer" at NECC, most had been in the Vietnam conflict, although many had served earlier. There was state and national legislation to provide benefits to all those who had been in the armed forces since the Korean War. For some, eligibility for benefits depended on first clearing away "bad paper" from their records. A "veterans' representative," from the Veterans' Administration, Dick Braley, was also sent to the NECC campus to assist in such matters. This former Air Force Captain was aware that sometimes the "system" had erred; some veterans had been given less than an honorable discharge for smoking a single joint of marijuana and he helped them in making appeals for review and reversal of such decisions.

Among the veterans, at least twenty-five percent had seen the horrors of Vietnam combat. Problems of readjustment often had involved marital separations and divorce. Yet despite these factors, as a group they not only accepted the structure of college life and its "authority figures" (they treated Harold Bentley and John Dimitry as the "base commander"), but also quickly fit into the system and, especially by getting involved in student activities, were able to use it very effectively to achieve many important objectives, not only for themselves, for the college, and for the community.

Particularly through their Veterans' Club, they decided on their priorities and then worked to realize them. Their organizational and leadership skills were recognized by the student body at large and for several years in the mid-seventies they provided the steering for such all-college activities as the Student Council and *The Observer*. They knew how to "capture" the system and to work within it.

To conclude on the special role of the veterans at NECC, several other strands need to be woven into the fabric. First, the provision of services to them did not, for the most part, cost the college much in the way of financial outlay. Federal programs provided thirty dollars per veteran for outreach, counseling, and special programs on their behalf. Veterans' benefits, in fact, were a boost to the local economy. As indicated in the *President's Report* for academic year 1978-79, for example, the college in that year administered \$880,036 in grants to vets for their support, food, and housing while enrolled. Legislatively mandated tuition waivers for veterans in the Division of Continuing Education, however, were a major loss of income to that self-supporting unit.

Secondly, meeting their needs proved to be a big part in spreading the reputation of NECC as a caring institution. The waves the veterans made

were visible and traveled far. On one occasion they hired a bus, went to a VA hospital and took some of their older, forgotten brothers to a baseball game at Fenway Park. A videotape of a veteran trying to navigate the NECC campus in a wheelchair before the removal of architectural barriers was “exported” and shown, for instance, to the state legislature in Maine.

The vets did more than “talk.” Individually and collectively, they managed to smooth out their anger and to redirect their energies to positive social and educational purposes. On one occasion, they staged a “sit-in,” literally sitting on a dean’s desk to demand (and get) better space for their office and club. On another occasion, a “statement” was made by rolling a hand grenade down the corridor outside a given “action office.” While such events were rare exceptions, they do suggest the fragility and volatility of feelings at the time. These impulses for direct action were minor ripples in an ocean of professionalism, empathy, and support which the college provided. Like the other “nontraditional” student groups, the veterans responded by taking full advantage of the opportunities which NECC created for them.

## Female Students

A fourth major category of nontraditional students to whom NECC reached out, and who, in turn, changed and enriched the college, is the very large number of “women returning” to education and to employment. Female students had been part of NECC since its founding in 1961, but it was not until 1973 that specific outreach began to be made to those women in the community whose experience in higher education had been delayed, or interrupted, or even not considered because of such factors as economic necessity, traditional responsibilities in the home and family, or gender stereotypes inherited from an earlier culture. For the women of the Merrimack Valley from their early twenties to retirement age, the years 1970-1985 witnessed the discovery that NECC is also *their* community college.

In 1973, the college began to target “returning women” and to indicate that the institutional support would be there if the personal obstacles could be cleared away. A “Conference for Women Returning,” planned jointly by the DCE Assistant Director Barbara Webber and the Director of the Andover Womens’ Center, Naomi Shertzer, was organized to meet on February 15, 1973 at the Memorial Hall Library in Andover.

The all-day conference, which involved a \$2 registration fee and a “bring-it-yourself brown bag lunch,” was about “returning” in general, i.e., either to education or to the job market and to workshops addressing not just the opportunities but also the practical problems involved. There was a large advance registration for it.

The principal speakers at this conference were Grace Ferril, the Regional Director of the Women’s Bureau, U.S. Department of Labor, and Barbara Schram, a community organizer, social worker, and doctoral candidate at the Harvard University School of Education. One of the issues which the conference addressed was “how to get credit for life experience,” a clear indicator of the nontraditional concerns of the group and of NECC’s recognition of its need to respond to such concerns. The after-

noon sessions of the conference were panel discussions and workshops around the issues raised. The overwhelming response and the fallout from this first outreach effort to women galvanized NECC into many changes and an ongoing program of meeting women's needs.



The first specific program for women offered by NECC was held in April, 1973, a conference for "Wives of Police Officers" organized by the wives of local policemen and DCE's newly appointed Coordinator of Women's Programs, Louise Casey of Groveland. A flyer for this conference reveals that much of its purpose was to help families of policemen to support their husband/father in *his* role. But it also suggested some new strategies and new directions for the women as well. It focused their attention on "Expanding Your Horizons: Creative Arts, Credit and Non-Credit Courses, New Skills." Ironically, this first concrete effort to address women's issues had come about at NECC mainly because of the success of the Law Enforcement Program, which drew hundreds of local policemen to the college. NECC was expanding its own horizons by realizing that "Daddy" did not live alone and that his life partner might be just as interested in and capable of personal and professional growth as he was.

In any case, things began to move for women at the college. A Women's Center was set up and, by 1976, Naomi Shertzer could report that DCE had sponsored the following activities in the preceding three years:

1. Women's Workshop - discussion group on roles and goals for women, in conjunction with the Andover Women's Center.
2. Human Sexuality - a course offered in conjunction with the Family Planning Project of Lowell.
3. Women's Image in Art - a course given by Julie Swain.
4. Women in Films - a film discussion series led by Linda Kraus.
5. Personal Growth - a course in mind and body connections given by Mary Gendler.
6. Psychology of Women- a course in women's roles and issues.

7. The Emerging Woman - a self-discovery workshop led by Nancy Wotherspoon.
8. Project Self - a series of workshops given by Louise Casey.
9. "Women's Festival" - May, 1975 - a day celebrating women's interests.
10. Women-Conference Change - November 15, 1975 - a major conference attended by 180 women. The keynote speaker was former Haverhill resident, Mary Howell, M.D. Her address "A Gift: The Second Half of our Lives" concluded with this challenging observation: "For those of us past 40, it seems like a gift to realize that we have this second half of our lives to work together for our sisters, for our children, for all who are oppressed, for ourselves."
11. Career Tools Workshop - problem-solving techniques for realizing career goals, taught by Patricia Culver.
12. Women and Aging - a course on the capabilities of older women students.
13. VOW - Vocational Opportunities for Women: an NECC information clearinghouse on local employment opportunities.

From 1974 through 1978, NECC was living through the "lean years," an era when its state funding was so low that cutbacks of services and layoffs of college personnel were more likely than expansion of any kind of programming, however worthwhile and important. Efforts were constantly made to induce local business and industry to contribute to the outreach effort to middle-age women. Major national philanthropic foundations were approached with successive grant proposals. But most of the desired "follow-through" materialized through a combination of federal funding (under CETA, JTPA, and Aid to Displaced Homemaker programs) and the investment of scarce institutional (DCE & CS) resources.

After 1977, the college began to package its academic offerings with this clientele in mind; on the suggestion of Chet Hawrylcw, it started to offer part-time studies in the Day Division, scheduling courses to meet for three hours just once a week (typically from 9-12 mornings or 1-4 afternoons). By 1983, nearly 200 area women were annually taking advantage of this plan and many of them, having gained confidence with a limited schedule, decided to become full-time students and to matriculate in a degree or certificate program.

In that same era of the late seventies, a number of other initiatives were taken to expand opportunities for area women. On September 18, 1976, for example, the college hosted a kickoff luncheon for the area campaign in support of the Equal Rights Amendment. Some 250 area women came to hear a distinguished group of panelists and the district's Representative in Congress, Michael Harrington, discuss the prospects and implications of its passage. During 1978-79, NECC collaborated with the state Department of Education's Division of Occupational Education and Women's Enterprises of Boston on "Project ACT" (Access to Careers in Technology), which aimed at recruiting women for technical careers, and providing them with assessment, training, support and placement. In 1979, there was collaboration with the Women's Work Project in Newburyport and the

first in a series of Women's Opportunity days, held both in the morning and in the evening. Out of such gatherings, NECC became aware of the keen interest of community women in the emerging high tech industries of the region, in alternative work schedules, job sharing, permanent part-time employment, and the quality of environment in the workplace.

In the spring of 1980, an all-day conference sponsored by the Governor's Commission on the Status of Women was held at the college and revealed a tremendous range of women's issues and concerns. Of the many issues and concerns, one in particular, "Women in Technology," held the key which would open doors to funding, staffing, and growth of the women's outreach effort. A Cambridge, Massachusetts institute, the Technical Education Research Center, had been awarded a federal grant of \$500,000 from the Department of Education to develop two books. In 1980, NECC was chosen as one of five field test sites in the country to use the first of these books, *Nuts and Bolts*, and to assess its effectiveness in designing technical training programs for women. Thus in the summer of 1980, Mary Jane Gillespie came to the campus to conduct this field testing. As had been the case with Veterans' Counselor Dick Reilly, this apparently short-term assignment grew into a long-term effort. When the grant funds ran out, the college decided to keep up and indeed increase momentum in this direction. It named Ms. Gillespie as the Director of a new Center for Women and Technical Careers.

Focus on women's issues, however, was not limited to just the Division of Continuing Education. Throughout the seventies and eighties, much was also happening along parallel lines in the Day Division. The curriculum came to include first individual courses, then thematic studies and, after 1982, a full course concentration of six courses in Women's Studies. The prime movers of this curriculum enrichment were Linda Kraus, Priscilla Bellairs, Mary Harada, Selma Singer, Eleanor Hope-McCarthy, Anne Laszlo and Mary Prunty. During 1983-1984, a special committee on gender balance throughout all the curricula of the college came into being. Working in conjunction with other colleges, it focused attention on gender balance not only in textbooks but also to go with not only in faculty attitudes and even in classroom techniques. As a result, sex stereotyping has been identified as one of the major obstacles to the realization of full educational opportunity for the female students who now constitute the majority element of the student body.

## Elders

Another stereotype which dissolved as the college grew and changed was the notion that a college is only for the young. The senior citizens of the Merrimack Valley "invaded" the campus in 1975 and ever since then have also made it *their* community college. In 1985, many hundreds of them were participating in a rich smorgasbord of activities and programs fitted to their needs and desires. This phenomenon is identified as "Life Long Learning" and both the participants and the program itself, initially guided by Carolyn Reynolds and May DiPietro, became phenomenally vibrant and successful.

The elders have primarily been attracted to the college more as a re-



source for socialization and cultural activities than as a place for courses, classes and degrees - although hundreds of them have taken advantage of their Gold Card privilege of free tuition in all the college's academic offerings. Within individual courses and certificate or degree programs, their presence has made the student body truly comprehensive and intergenerational. Their personal life experiences, generously shared with younger classmates, are unique, special and varied threads in the tapestry of learning. A discussion of the 1930's, for example, is so much enriched when one of them can tell about the personal impact of the Great Depression or what it meant to them to hear a radio message from President Franklin D. Roosevelt about a new program called Social Security. Like the other "nontraditional" students, they brought more than they take away. The story of why and how they joined the college community will be given here. Essentially, NECC had little to do with or for people over age fifty from 1960 through 1975. Most of its contact with them was as parents or relatives of the younger students who enrolled. They came to commencements and open houses and student performances; a few of them took courses in the "Evening Division." In general, they ignored the college and it ignored them; it was preoccupied with other concerns, even though many members of the NECC staff had a deep and sincere interest in "adult education."

As happened throughout the nation, a whole new awareness of older Americans and their needs began to emerge in the late sixties and early seventies. Governmental agencies and special funding began to address this large constituency about its increasing self-awareness and its needs. The presence and the power of the "Gray Panthers" came into focus. At Northern Essex, it once again was Barbara Webber who began to make things happen. In her efforts to provide the widest possible range of "community services," she had already identified the limited-English speaking and the women's constituencies; in 1974, she suggested making similar outreach to elders of the region.

Within the Day Division of the college, there had been a specific course in Gerontology introduced by Dr. Duane Windemiller as early as 1971. Several individuals, including Marjorie Goudreault (then a member of the NECC Regional Advisory Board and subsequently Chair of the college's Board of Trustees) and June F. Spurk (wife of the author and a part-time NECC faculty member), were preparing to be of assistance by earning a certificate in Social Gerontology through a course which Boston University offered at Northern Essex. By late 1975, NECC was planning its own degree and certificate programs in Gerontology. Working with the Human Services Division Chairman Paul Bevilacqua, Haverhill Attorney Albert Boulanger designed these programs, which were implemented as part of the curriculum in 1976 and first directed by Dr. William O'Rourke, who had worked in the mid-seventies in local agencies serving elders. Thus, there was an institutional network of expertise and concern, a growing awareness of the size and the complexity of the need, a close working relationship with agencies in the field, and an increasing readiness to respond to that need.

Financially, however, it was the worst of times. Faculty and staff morale was at an all-time low because of an extended three-year "freeze" on

salaries. Also, 1975 was to usher in a five-year period of financial crisis in the state government; the crisis, particularly in 1975, led to sudden budget cutbacks and institutional trauma. If it wished to help senior citizens in the community, NECC would have to rely on some type of special funding and on a lot of volunteer effort from many quarters, especially from the more than 60,000 elders then estimated to be residing in the region. In fact, analysis of age groups in the population-at-large, revealed that the Merrimack Valley had the second highest percentage in the nation of people over 60 years of age.

Early in 1975, Northern Essex received a small (\$7,000) but significant grant from the state Department of Elder Affairs. The proposal was drafted by Barbara Webber, and this grant allowed NECC to hire a part-time member in DCE whose function would be to develop programs specifically for senior citizens. The person appointed was Benjamin S. Hersey, President of DART, Inc., a Cambridge, Massachusetts firm whose Board of Directors also included Lillian Glickman, MSW, and Dr. I. Ira Goldenberg of Harvard University. This trio had just completed a national survey and manual for the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare. It was entitled *Community Colleges Respond to Elders: A Sourcebook for Program Development*. Ben Hersey knew the state of the art. He also knew that the key was involvement of the elders themselves and acted accordingly.

By the end of March 1975, things began to move. NECC setup a Special Topics course called "Elders Serving Elders" and subtitled "Devel-



oping Programs for Ourselves." This thirteen-week course, which offered three credits as an option, drew a class of fifteen members whose major goal was to plan an event at the college for a much larger group. They began meeting on March 31 and the event which they designed was truly a major happening in the NECC story, the famous "Invasion Day" of June 25, 1975.

At the very outset, a key question was: "who are the elders? At what age does one become a "senior citizen?" When the *Haverhill Gazette* reported on the project on April 25, 1975, it did so in an article called "College Plans Programs For Those Over 50" which described how the task

force was studying Merrimack Valley elderly needs, a review of national programs and community resources, analysis of advocacy activities, and training in program planning. This juxtaposition of the terms "those over 50" and "elderly needs" gave rise to a long and interesting evolution of sensitive terminology. Should the outreach be directed to "Elders," "Golden-Agers," "Senior Citizens," or some other acceptable name?

Whatever the name, it was the elders who defined themselves and their needs. "Over 50," it was decided, was pushing it a bit. On June 12, 1975, the *Gazette* again reported on the plans for Invasion Day in an article called "Residents Coordinate Programs For Elderly At Northern Essex." This update indicated that the program would be for "people over 55 years of age."

Throughout May and June of 1975, there were many, almost daily, news stories in all the local papers about the "great invasion" and the series of planning seminars and workshops for it. The college's invitation, like its handbill "Golden Opportunities for Golden Agers," was widely publicized, and reservations for the special free bus transportation to the campus from each of the surrounding cities and towns began to come in. The dignitaries and guest speakers gave their commitments, and excitement filled the air, that special excitement of a new adventure. It recreated the mood of August 1961, when NECC was about to welcome its first class.

This "opening," however, was much more impressive. On Wednesday, June 25, the buses of elders began arriving. When the last one had discharged its passengers, nearly 1,500 "invaders" were on campus, including one gentleman who was 94 years young. There was a sense of farewell, because one of the party, Harold Bentley, was due to leave "his college" just four days later. The incoming President of Northern Essex, John Dimitry, had also wanted to be present, but was detained in Michigan for several more days to assist in the welcome and orientation of his successor at Macomb Community College. Dr. Dimitry, however, would soon be called upon to keep the promises and the commitments which were being made. Two significant differences from most receptions were first that in this case, the guests paid for their own lunch (fifty cents) and second, that it was they who received the presents. As they signed in for "Invasion Day" each of the guests was given a personal "Gold Card," entitling her/ him to the free use of college facilities such as the library, cafeteria, and gymnasium.

As it often had before, NECC did not wait for "higher authorities" to decide an issue. Just a few weeks after Invasion Day, some of the elders who had planned it met with President Dimitry and asked if their Gold Cards would represent a waiver of tuition charges. Although he was by then gravely worried about the worst financial crunch in NECC's history, Dr. Dimitry said "yes": from the fall semester of 1975 onward, anyone over age 62 could simply present his/her Gold Card, pay a \$3.00 registration fee and be enrolled in any DCE course. The decision made educational history in Massachusetts: NECC was the first public institution of higher education in the Commonwealth to extend such an offer to senior citizens. For a while, it had to be limited to courses offered by the financially autonomous Division of Continuing Education and Community Services. In January of 1978, however, the state legislature enacted a

bill which granted tuition waivers throughout the public higher education system to all persons over the age of 65 whose annual income did not exceed \$12,000. And, in 1979, legislation filed by then State Senator Sharon Pollard and former State Representative Francis Bevilacqua succeeded in reducing the eligibility to age sixty.

Thus the great “Gold Rush” of 1975 began to set people in motion, not for precious metal but for personal enrichment. During the first semester of the program (fall, 1975) 179 elders enrolled, tuition free, in 47 different courses. By the summer of 1976, 439 had signed up in 136 courses. In one year’s time, NECC thus had served more Golden Agers in DCE than it had young students during the first two years of the operation of the Day Division.

Because of the success of Invasion Day, the college, early in 1976, received another grant from the state DEA, for a project with three specific objectives: to develop courses for elders, to provide training for personnel who were already working in the delivery of services to elders, and to establish a program for elders at some off-campus site. This grant was small, approximately \$5,400, with an institutional matching contribution (in kind) of \$2,600. Yet it produced important outcomes:

1. A new course, “Women and Aging”
2. A practicum in Political Advocacy for Elders
3. A practicum in Service Delivery for Personnel of the Merrimack Valley Home Care Agency
4. A “Yankee City Day” for elders held in Newburyport on May 22, 1976
5. As a result of item 4, eight mini-courses of four weeks duration designed and offered in Newburyport in June of 1976.

This ambitious and low-cost project which Barbara Webber had proposed, was coordinated by a dynamic retiree, John C. Collins, who had served as the Director of the Massachusetts Division of Environmental Health. The “Yankee City Day” was particularly noteworthy, in that it took the outreach effort to consumers in their own community. It also brought NECC’s effort to the attention of important civic leaders such as Newburyport Mayor Byron J. Matthews and Redevelopment Authority Director John F. Bradshaw, who later served as Chairman of the Massachusetts Board of Regional Community Colleges, as well to the attention of the state Department of Elder Affairs and the region’s Congressman at that time, Michael Harrington.

Enthusiasm and renewal were to become and remain special hallmarks of the NECC Gold Carders. Classes in physical fitness, specially designed by Professor Carl Beal and other members of the Physical Education Department became perennial favorites, as did dancing, especially line dancing. Once “off their rockers,” the elders didn’t want to sit down again. They coined imaginative slogans, such as “Elder-cise Banishes Elder-Sighs” to recruit participants. They invited experts such as TV personality Maggie Letvin to come and show them just how agile they could be.

The years in which the elders began to make Northern Essex their

own were also the most difficult economic years for NECC, the "lean years," 1975-1980. Staff came and went largely in terms of the availability of "soft money" positions. Early in 1977, such funding allowed the hiring in DCE of a full-time outreach specialist, Ann Arnan, to work on elders programming. During the year 1977-78, came some important new activities, such as "Each One Teach One," a CETA grant which envisaged the training of 100 "older persons" to work as tutors/teacher aides in the public schools of Lawrence, Haverhill, and Newburyport. A number of seniors were already working as tutorial volunteers in the college's own reading, writing, and mathematics labs. In the summer of 1977, Ann's leadership brought a national program, ELDERHOSTEL, to the NECC campus for the first time. This program, which was then making its transition from being federally-funded to being self-supporting, was designed as a short immersion, in which elders would normally use the vacant dormitories of a residential campus and follow a number of courses over a period of one or two months. Since NECC had no dormitories available, it ran a "Commuter Elderhostel" over a two-week period. Courses in the Metric System, Astronomy, Archaeology, Geology, Theatre and Government were presented by faculty volunteers including Charles Adie, Bonnie Flythe, Elizabeth Wilcoxson, and Edward Spinney. Even without a physical hostel at its disposal, the college was extending its hospitality. A number of the seniors who took part in Elderhostel '77 continued their interest in these "study vacations" by attending various Elderhostels on other campuses.

Another meaningful dimension of the program was the way in which it helped the college to develop working partnerships with external institutions and agencies. A somewhat parallel trend began after 1975 in regard to academic programs and equipment as the college worked, through its Center for Business and Industry, to synchronize its curriculum with the needs of the regional economy. Part of becoming "comprehensive" was to realize that a college needed to work closely with institutions outside of itself. With regard to elders' programming, this realization led to many fruitful relationships and cooperative ventures. The spirit was intergenerational, inter-ethnic, inter-gender, and inter-denominational. For instance, one series of workshops focused on the question of a person's religious experience in late-life; the visiting speakers were a rabbi, a priest, a nun and a minister. The elders treated themselves to an understanding of different creeds and forms of spiritual expression.

The spirit was also all-embracing; it responded to interests which the elders had across a broad range of topics. In April and May of 1978, for example, NECC collaborated with the Essex Agricultural and Technical Institute, which hosted a series on "Elder Concerns: Issues and Answers." Weekly three-hour workshops were led by specialists from Merrimack Valley Legal Services, Inc., Essex County Cooperative Extension Service, the University of Rhode Island, Elder Services of the Merrimack Valley and the University of Massachusetts on the following wide range of concerns: personal finances, estate planning, consumerism, food shopping and safety, health care, clothing, housing and the psychology of aging. These free sessions were "Right on" for older Americans and the brochure which publicized them gratefully acknowledged the assistance given by the NECC

Elders Advisory Board and by President Dimitry and Jack Wysong, whose position as Assistant to the President included responsibility for elders programming during all of 1978.

Such collaboration helped to pave the way for Northern Essex to receive major funding for its outreach effort. Between 1974 and 1976, NECC had requested \$375,000 for this activity and had received only \$20,400. But, having forged ahead on a shoestring, it finally received substantial help; Project REROC (Resource Education Research Opportunity Center) was a nearly half-million dollar Title IV grant awarded by the regional CETA administration to Northern Essex for the period August, 1978 to September, 1979. Under REROC, a full-time staff of ten people, directed by Terry Cargan went as outreach coordinators into all the communities of the region. They heard what the interests of the local elders were, designed responsive seminars and workshops, and recruited volunteer instructors for a large number of modular courses on topics similar to those in the "Essex Aggie" series.

The largest single achievement of Project REROC, however, was that it undertook a systematic survey of the needs of senior citizens and the existing resources to meet those needs in twenty-three towns and cities of the region. A comprehensive listing, *Resources for Elders*, was prepared in pamphlet form. It was issued in July, 1980 under the joint auspices of NECC and Elder Services of the Merrimack Valley, and over 10,000 copies of it were distributed so that individual senior citizens could tell at a glance what services were available and how to obtain them.

The REROC Project led to other results as well: a new literature course entitled "Images in Aging," a "VITA" program (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance), and, in May of 1979, a great celebration of enthusiasm and vitality called the "Renaissance Fair." The flyer for this event, which was designed to "celebrate the positive image of aging," showed how much interest had developed during the four years since Invasion Day. It carried the image of an owl, long the symbol of DCE. But this owl was O.W.L. the "older, wiser learner." The slogan of this new owl was provocative: "Get off your tailfeathers!" It also indicated that the day, which drew nearly 1,500 visitors, was being sponsored by "The Elder Program, Division of Human Services, Northern Essex Community College." In announcing the shift of responsibility from the President's Office, John Dimitry had noted that this was the first time in the history of NECC that the responsibility for providing community services had been placed in one of the academic divisions of the college. This arrangement continued for many years and it worked out exceptionally well.

The provision of services to elders was, in fact, getting "better and bolder" as the decade of the eighties began. Large external funding ran out, but enthusiasm and institutional commitment grew. The programs came to be known as "3-L" events - "Learn, Lunch, and Live-it-up." These were days which ran from 2 to 8 p.m., with an afternoon learning session, a buffet break at suppertime and an early evening recreational activity such as dancing. People could come to part or all of each day planned. This flexible "3-L" concept of Senior Aide Edith Jackson was noted and described as a "resounding success" in the periodic newsletter of the MBRCC, the *Massachusetts Community College Herald*. Flexibility and variety, as well as

imagination, were particularly developed by Edith, who in September of 1979 became the first Coordinator of Elders' Programming. She and the elders also "flexed" their muscles by requesting their own space on the campus, and in the spring of 1980 a "prime space" office in the elevator lobby of the Classroom Building (later renamed as the Liberal Arts Building) became their headquarters. For the next two years, until December of 1981, Edith Jackson used that space as the planning center and homeport of an expanding program which, on a suggestion of Bill O'Rourke, came to be known as Life Long Learning. There were still three "L's," but the emphasis was becoming less and less age-connected, more and more "inclusive." This philosophy met with very encouraging results, as can be seen from the numbers of persons who participated in LLL-sponsored events over that two-year period: spring 1980, 379; summer 1980, 560; fall 1980, 620; spring 1981, 586; fall 1981, 751.

Since 1982, the Life Long Learning Program has continued to expand and flourish under the dynamic leadership of Carolyn Reynolds, Louise Kramer and Claudia Lach. Over 100 workshops have been presented each year, with more than 2,500 senior citizens participating. The main ingredient has been a free lecture series held weekly on Thursday afternoons. Talks, slide shows, and discussions by unpaid volunteer speakers have covered almost every imaginable topic, from poetry to politics, from herb gardens to hearing loss, from oriental rug-making to oriental trekking in Nepal, China and Japan. Like Edith Jackson, Carolyn Reynolds was able to recruit the interest and the effort of unpaid volunteers in this stimulating series. Costs are kept at a minimum and the benefit of wide participation by members of the faculty and staff are ensured.

One illustration of the volunteer concept at work is connected with a local organization, the Merrimack Valley Herb Society. Several years ago, this group wanted to use the campus facilities for a meeting. They were told that since their organization was not connected with the college, and since they had recently used the campus for another event, a small use fee would have to be charged. The Society then asked if it could become part of the Life Long Learning Program and offered to create and maintain an herb garden on the Northern Essex grounds. This offer was too good to be refused, and so Northern Essex acquired its own herb garden in the Quadrangle and the Society could put its limited resources to use for planting, rather than for fees.

With its lecture series, topical workshops, excursions, art exhibits, book discussion groups, arm-chair travel, and many other activities, Life Long Learning has become a major and very significant part of the life of the college. In an October, 1985 memorandum to the Board of Trustees, President Dimitry said that because of its momentum and energy, "We are truly an institution for all ages." The validity of this claim can be witnessed almost daily as the senior citizens take advantage of the varied programs and services available to them. It was also confirmed in April of 1984 when the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges (AACJC) invited Northern Essex to make a presentation on the Life Long Learning Program at its annual convention in Washington, D.C. This selection, and the comments of those who attended, reflected how in nine years time Northern Essex had gone from being "invaded" to being a national

model in this field.

## **Students with Disabilities**

Another group of nontraditional students to whom the college reached out was the large number of persons with some physical disability which could serve as a block to their involvement in higher education. Some of these potential students could be grouped according to particular disabilities (e.g., vision impairment or deaf/hard of hearing) which might require very specific assistance. For others, the need might be something as simple as temporary access to elevators. The common need, however, was for a caring and supportive climate, an atmosphere of help without patronization. Serving students with disabilities was as much a matter of ambience as it was a matter of specific facilities or equipment or programs. The common desire of students with physical disabilities was simply to be able to come and use the college as everyone else in the community could. This “nontraditional” group crossed over the lines of many other groups. In the presentation to the AACJC Convention about Life Long Learning, for example, it was noted that the lecture series is always held in the Library Conference Area, “a readily accessible area for any persons who may be physically disabled.” Prior to 1975, as described earlier, any “readily accessible” facilities at NECC were present more by accident than by design and it had taken considerable time, thought, and funding to achieve the barrier-free campus which the Veterans’ Club demanded.

In the first decade of NECC, students applying for admission were required to obtain from their physician a form describing “their general health and any medical abnormalities which the college should be informed of” as the catalog put it, in the rather insensitive terminology of the sixties. Beyond providing mandatory accident insurance and optional health insurance, the college was not able to offer much more than an aspirin or a bandaid for physical distress. By contrast, the 1984-85 admissions Viewbook “Northern Essex Has What You Need” contains the following related statements:

Health Services: Health services include first aid, medications, treatments, counseling, referrals and follow-up. A physician is on campus during special clinical hours; a registered nurse is available daily. Health services are free of charge.

Disabled Students: Services for disabled students include counseling, special registration sessions, interpreters, note takers, personal assistance, special educational equipment and referrals. The campus is architecturally barrier-free.

It notes that there is a specific Office for Students with Disabilities, directed by Rubin Russell, and certificate and degree programs in Interpreter Training. It also notes that the college is the regional extension center for America’s leading college for non-hearing students, the federally established Gallaudet College of Washington, D.C. In these and other respects,



NECC has received recognition for its outreach efforts in this regard. How did the college become aware of this constituency and what measures did it take on behalf of individuals with physical disabilities?

The story begins in 1968 when the President of the MBRCC, William G. Dwyer, sent a memo to all community college presidents, informing them of a survey then underway by the state's Bureau of Building Construction as to any alterations that might be needed to their buildings in order to make them suitable "for the use of handicapped people." The survey did not go far beyond mere accessibility. Quoting the BBC directive, Dr. Dwyer indicated that:

... initial consideration of the corrective measures will have to be limited to such items as the installation of ramps, changing of doorswing direction, width of doors and other type alterations that may be required in order to be able *to simply admit the physically handicapped to the building* (emphasis added).

On September 27, 1968, President Bentley replied to this information survey saying that Northern Essex had no modifications to request, since its main building on Chadwick Street was only temporary and that its other instructional sites were all rented facilities, for which the state and the college were not responsible. The exchange of this correspondence does raise the perplexing question of why the BBC, which supervised construction of the permanent campus, did not ensure that such features would be included in its design, rather than having to retrofit the new buildings after their completion. The documents also show that architectural barriers preceded the consideration of other barriers. Once "through the widened doors," these particular students would need and expect other forms of encouragement and support.

September of 1968 was also the month when Betty Coyne joined the counseling staff of Northern Essex. At the time of her hiring, Harold Bentley was heard to remark that he was absolutely positive that in Betty Coyne, the college would have the services of an "angel." And, although over the years Betty was primarily concerned with transfer counseling, she was also the key person who caused the college to recognize and respond to the needs of the physically disabled.

In the late sixties and early seventies, a small number of students being helped by the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission began to apply for admission to the college. Betty developed a specialty of working with these students and of letting faculty know about ways of facilitating their educational goals. In 1973, she suggested, and Northern Essex held, the first statewide meeting for colleges which were in any way serving the disabled. She helped to create working relationships between the colleges and other agencies. She also managed to get NECC students interested and involved in such efforts. In June of 1975, for example, the *Burlington News* reported how Northern Essex and the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind had co-sponsored a special day for twenty-five blind and intellectually and developmentally disabled children from the Protestant Guild for the Blind of Watertown, MA. A day of picnicking and recreation was held at Salisbury Beach, where the Shaheen Fun-orama Amusement Park hosted

the children. Twenty-one Northern Essex student volunteers went along to help out, as did Mr. Charles Snow of Haverhill. Charles Snow, himself blind, was a Rehabilitation Counselor for the co-sponsoring agency and also, as a talented member of local singing groups and, often in contact with the general public, was able to spread the word about the college's concern. Another NECC staff member, Rubin Russell, also accompanied the group on this trip. He had recently joined the college as the Director of the Drop-In Center and from the start brought to it an atmosphere of compassion. From "Rubin's Room" there came a high percentage of the student volunteers for this and other generous causes; and Rubin's expertise subsequently was recognized by the governing board, the MBRCC, which appointed him in 1978 to conduct a year-long training program for the staff and faculty of all fifteen Massachusetts community colleges. The training program was designed to help faculty teach classes in which students with physical disabilities were present.

Another pioneer of this outreach effort was David Lipsey, who served from 1975 to 1977 as the college's first full-time Counselor Coordinator for Handicapped Students. His appointment was made possible by a CETA grant, which made Northern Essex the first Massachusetts community college to have a full-time specialist in this field, and in the brief period of two years he was able to set down firm foundations for an ongoing office which would help the disabled in many areas: special registrations, transportation, campus facilities, student tutors and note takers, and particular learning aids and equipment. David was a strong advocate. In the fall of 1975, he arranged the campus visit of a national hero, Harold J. Russell, the chairman of the federal Committee on the Employment of the Handicapped. Mr. Russell had lost both hands in an accidental bomb detonation during World War II and was nationally known for his autobiography, *Victory In My Hands*, and his role in the film, "The Best Years of Our Lives." He toured the college, praised Northern Essex for having begun this work and persuaded Dr. Dimitry and Norman Landry to intensify the outreach effort, especially in educating the disabled population for subsequent employment. His message fell on fertile ground. Through the earlier efforts of two NECC "founders," Thomas Garvey and Malcolm Fryer, the city of Haverhill had been selected, just prior to the opening of the college, as a national model of hiring the handicapped.

As early as 1974, when the Division of Continuing Education sponsored a ten-week course in "Signing," the deaf and hard of hearing population began to be recognized as a special constituency for NECC. That particular first course was taught by Clifford Lawrence, the Director of Deafness Resources of Andover. The combination of community re-

**Barrier-Free  
Education  
for  
Students  
with  
Special  
Needs**



**NORTHERN ESSEX  
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sponse and Cliff's personal commitment led to the design and implementation in 1976 of a certificate program and an associate degree program in Deafness Communication (later retitled as Interpreter Training). NECC was not merely content to discover a need; it acted to address the need. These programs, directed originally by Cliff Lawrence and later by William Huston, have trained a significant number of persons in interpreting skills and enabled them to provide this all-important service. In the fall semester of 1984, forty deaf and hard of hearing students were registered at NECC, where they could receive personal help from Sidney G. Pietzsch (herself



hard of hearing) a full-time counselor employed specifically to assist in their needs through a special office of the Counseling Department known under the acronym SHIP (Students with Hearing Impairments Program). The very presence of not just a "general" Office for Students with Disabilities, but the provision of this specific expertise was indicative of the college's desire to provide meaningful support, both academically and personally, to the deaf and hard of hearing population.

The "ripple effect" of serving students with disabilities can be seen in many other positive manifestations. During the fall semester of 1985, for example, the Office for Students with Disabilities sponsored for eight consecutive weeks a noontime seminar series of "Brown Bag Fridays" on the following topics: Breaking Down the Biggest Barrier of All: Attitudes; Breaking Down the Second Biggest Barrier: Misinformation and Lack of Information; Learning Disabilities: Okay, What are They?; A Brief Introduction to Conversational Sign Language (two sessions); Fun Ways to Handle Stress; How to Take Better Class Notes for Yourself or Others; The New Move Toward Independent Living.

As had been the case with senior citizens, there was also the problem of finding the "right" terminology in identifying and serving this student constituency. At the outset, the nomenclature "Handicapped" prevailed. During 1976-77, it was changed to "Special Needs Students." Later the concept of "Disabilities" appeared to be the best term. Any term chosen seemed patronizing or somewhat negative, no matter how encouraging the services or staff tried to be. NECC worked hard at trying to overcome this



## **HEARING IMPAIRED CLUSTER**

Academic Support Center  
Division of Instructional Development  
Northern Essex Community College  
Haverhill, MA 01830

semantic challenge by creating the best of facilities in the most positive atmosphere. In 1984, for example, NECC electrician David Dubois worked intensely and imaginatively on the wiring system of the library building to install a "Handicapped Assistance Buzz-er" on an inner doorway of the building so that students with mobility impairments could get prompt help in entering.

The success of NECC in addressing these complicated emotional, psychological, physical, and educational needs was also attested to a few months earlier when the *Boston Sunday Globe* chose to do a feature article on February 5, 1984. It was captioned "Northern Essex Community College: Where the Disabled are Enabled." The "bottom line" of that article was clearly that enabling individuals with disabilities has been a team effort extending over many years and beneficial not only to the target group but also to the institution as a whole.

The outreach effort to the disabled widened not only the perspectives of individual students but also the role of NECC as an educational institution. During the year 1979, the then Gallaudet College of Washington, D.C. was interested in establishing a regional center somewhere in the

northeast part of the United States. This center, like its midwestern counterpart at Johnson County Community College in Olathe, Kansas, would assist Gallaudet to fulfill its nationwide mission of higher education for deaf students. Many institutions were considered as possible sites, but Gallaudet chose Northern Essex, and on June 15, 1980 the Gallaudet College Extension Center at NECC began operation. It was a smooth-working partnership between the specialized baccalaureate institution and the comprehensive community college, a partnership skillfully cultivated and nurtured by DCE and CS Dean John Peroni. A member of Gallaudet's professional staff, Jean Brennan, served as its first Director. Working out of an office in the Student Center, Jean brought the services and programs of Gallaudet to the entire New England area. Later, under Director Kathy Vesey, New York and New Jersey are also served.

Held in different places throughout the region, these programs have served annually more than 2,000 people of a complex target audience: deaf adults, parents of deaf children, educators of the deaf, business persons, legislators, social service agencies, public service agencies, senior citizens, students of sign language, deaf/blind persons, and other concerned persons and agencies. It has become what it set out to be: a dynamic regional clearinghouse for information on and assistance to the total deaf community, including the hard-of-hearing.

## Academic Support

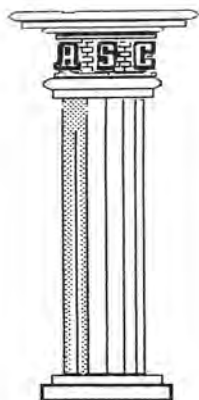
The final and unifying dimension of the outreach effort to all of the non-traditional students was the creation and development over the years of a comprehensive Academic Support Center. The idea of having a special place with specific developmental resources and staffing was implicit (and embryonically present) right from the beginning of ventures like Discovery and ESL. It was the minds and hopes of the nontraditional pioneers like Sheila Shively, Sandra Fotinos, and Ken Smith. Inadequate budgets long kept it as an impossible dream. What emerged to fill the obvious need was a network of separate volunteer faculty efforts, the Writing Center created by the English Department, the Math Lab sponsored by the Mathematics Department, and the Reading Lab and ESL Office which had grown out of the English Department. For years, only two full-time teaching professionals, Patricia McDermott and Sandra Fotinos, could be allocated to these skills areas. The Discovery formula for assisting students with academic gaps or blocks was recognized as effective and there were long-deferred plans and dreams of making the support services more widely available and utilized. There was some coordination provided by the staff and faculty of Discovery, whose Director, Ken Smith, made perennial pleas for more staff, more funding, and more useful equipment and space. His persistence ultimately prevailed and the college began, in the late seventies, to move toward putting such a unified network into place.

The basic ingredient of the Academic Support Center (ASC) has been the concept of early and thorough assessment of incoming students, particularly to determine the level of their skills in reading, writing, and mathematics. The Assessment Center, directed by NECC graduate Patricia Belmont, gives incoming students more than a mere awareness of their ability levels. It indicates whether they are ready to begin a regular college program or if they should first take one or more developmental courses offered by the other components of the Academic Support Center: the ESL Cluster, the Math Lab, Reading Lab, or the Writing Lab.

Historically, it was the urging of Patricia Belmont and Ken Smith which led NECC to offer assessment services not just to a relatively small number of “non-traditional” students, but to all incoming students. Assessment can reveal academic strengths as well as developmental needs, and some new students learn from it that they may be prepared to begin work in advanced courses immediately, rather than at developmental or introductory levels. Because of the underlying philosophy shared by Patricia Belmont and the successive Academic Support Center Directors, Ken Smith, Edward Korza, and James Ortiz, the emphasis has shifted away from the “remediation” of the “deficiencies of the educationally disadvantaged” (the terminology of the sixties and early seventies) to a more positive, and much more widely appealing emphasis on the building up of basic academic skills and also the enhancement of more advanced skills. By the early eighties, large numbers of NECC students of all kinds were using the different centers of the ASC for assistance ranging from the most elementary to the most complex levels.

Assessment testing of new students had begun at Northern Essex as

early as 1974 on the suggestion of Counselor Dick LeClair. Yet it was not until 1979 that real momentum began to develop in this regard. Lack of adequate funding kept both staffing and facilities far short of the ideal. An institutional decision to change this situation was made. The decision had the full support of the President, the Dean of Academic Affairs, Bob Mc-



## ACADEMIC SUPPORT CENTER

Division of Instructional Development  
NORTHERN ESSEX COMMUNITY COLLEGE  
Haverhill, Massachusetts

Donald, and the Chairman of the Division of Instructional Development, David Kelley, and was expressed in the three goals set for the Academic Support Center: to assist students in acquiring the skills necessary to be successful at Northern Essex; to support the Divisions of the college in their delivery of educational service; to provide access to the college to those who might otherwise be deprived of such an advantage. Noble goals, such as these, require specific resources for their realization. NECC sought the resources by making proposal after proposal to both state and federal funding sources. Enrollment distribution charts showed that as many as twenty percent of the student body were in developmental programs. The Board of Regents was politely but strongly reminded of its responsibility to correct "historic inequities in funding." Additional space was allocated to the ASC and the labs were physically upgraded and equipped with state-of-the art hardware and software. The staff was slowly but steadily increased so that by the autumn of 1985, thirty-eight professionals (16 full-time and 22 part-

time employees) were members of the ASC team headed by James Ortiz. Major federal funding under a Special Services TRiO Program, was awarded in 1979 and has been renewed annually ever since. Even more crucial for the long term were the NECC efforts to secure state funding for its nontraditional programming. Some indication of how high in priority this commitment was can be seen in examining NECC state budget requests. For Fiscal '84, for example, out of a total budget request for \$9,461,946, nearly ten percent (\$839,928) was in the category of instructional support. In the Fiscal '85 request, while NECC asked for \$1,851,193 to expand instructional programs, it also requested \$1,065,804 for a comprehensive system of instructional development which would benefit the entire student body, but particularly benefit those needing support services. In crafting the narrative portion of this budget request, Mary Prunty indicated to the Regents that such needs were broad in scope and long-range in nature:

### *Nontraditional students*

Retention of students has increasingly become a key focus as the population of traditional-aged students has begun to decline.

Nontraditional students are becoming more the normative target population for all colleges, especially community colleges. Liaison between the college and a range of community agencies and suburban groups (e.g., Welfare Dept., Community Action, Displaced Homemakers, Local Veteran's Organizations) is needed, as well as promotion of alternative educational opportunities available to the adult learners.

Thus, nearly a quarter-century after the founding of the Massachusetts community college system, it was still vitally necessary to explain and justify to the state funding authorities that Northern Essex did not want its "open door" to become a "revolving door" and that the initial decision to operate community colleges implied a long-term obligation to provide the staff, facilities, and equipment to serve all of its students not just with a warm welcome but also with substantial effective support.

Northern Essex extended itself from 1970 through 1985 to identify and to meet the needs of the nontraditional students who changed the college perhaps even more than it changed them. To some hypothetical critic of ultraconservative bent, it might appear that this college had allowed itself to become "socialized, unamericanized, wimpified, emasculated, aged, crippled, and coddling. From the viewpoint of the college and its staff, it had chosen to begin taking steps to become more "humanized, cosmopolitan, accessible, balanced, enriched, responsive, and supportive" for those for whom it was established in the first place. In so doing, it created its own strong tradition of service to nontraditional students.

## Student Life: 1971-1985

At Northern Essex, as elsewhere throughout the United States, the nature of the student body changes imperceptibly from year to year, but noticeably over longer spans of time. It always reflects the economic, cultural, philosophical, and political climate of the times. It takes on the special hues of local concerns, national priorities, and even global issues.

An earlier chapter has described something of the major trends and special characteristics of NECC students as a group from the founding of the college until the move to the new campus in 1971. It is both challenging and significant to try to identify the key trends and the changing nuances of student life within the institution during the fifteen years in this chapter's title.

In the fall Semester of 1971, when mini-skirts, blue jeans, and long hair were all in vogue, the greatest concern of the student body was about parking at the new campus with its unpaved lots. The saga of the "mudflats" was about to begin. In the mid-eighties, the term "mudflats" was still part of the special jargon of NECC, usually being applied with some hyperbole to the now paved, but then gravel-surfaced new parking lot which was opened on the southwest corner of the campus in the late seventies to accommodate the growing student body.

That concern, along with ecological issues and a large amount of advertising space enticing the use of liquor (a pitcher of beer for \$1.50 at local establishments!) dominated the news of that first year in the new facility. By late fall of 1971, the new campus had become a quagmire. Even President Bentley's car sustained a broken axle in the ooze that swallowed vehicles and enriched local towing garages. All in all, the students took it philosophically. One student, Jimmy Zaroulis, offered the following summary:



The mud was here, the mud was there, the mud was all around. It splatted, splashed and spitted while my car sank into the ground. P.S. Makes the Ho Chi Minh Trail look like a marble staircase. (*Observer*, April 4, 1972)

By the spring of 1972, the students had also begun to get their thoughts together on the implications of the “new Northern Essex.” The March 14 edition of the paper featured an editorial, “Why So Many?” which began by noting that close to 500 students had either dropped out or failed during the previous fall semester. It searched for reasons for this disconcerting pattern and found at least part of the “why” in the very nature of the new environment:

In the old campus, there was a feeling of community, by that I mean everyone was rather close ... No longer do you find instructors in the student lounge drinking coffee and chewing the fat with the students. There is one main reason ... physical separation. The faculty has its offices in the classroom building and the main student lounge is in the gym ... You can't find an instructor in the lounge to talk out your problems, you have to seek him out in his office, isolated and surrounded by two blank walls, a window and a door. Walking down the corridor to his office, you have the feeling that, at any time, a security guard is going to ask you to state your business, and ask for a security badge ... No longer is NECC a friendly little college, it is showing signs of developing into a Megaversity.

The sense of vastness and impersonality had become a new challenge for Northern Essex in its new facility, even as had been predicted and cautioned against by Dr. William C. Dwyer, President of the MBRCC. While welcoming the new campus, Dr. Dwyer also pointed out that even an institution of higher learning could “lose its soul” if the closeness of the pioneer era of deprivation were not somehow brought along to cushion the culture-shock of the new era of the permanent, expansive campus.

One event of academic year 1972-1973 which caused quite a stir began in August, 1972, in the course of student orientation programs. The college's new Drop-In-Center made available copies of a rather explicit “Birth-Control Handbook.” Some irate students and/or parents complained about this to local legislators, one of whom immediately questioned President Bentley about it and indicated that the matter might be referred for investigation to the State Obscene Literature Control Commission. The booklet was not suppressed, but the mode of distribution had to be altered; it could be made available to students who requested it, but not handed out in general fashion. The “scandal” was quickly smoothed over. Nonetheless the incident did illustrate that academic freedom on the campus of a publicly-supported community college did have to be exercised with special care and attention to public opinion, and especially to the views of the community's elected representatives in Boston. In the age of rapidly shifting public and private morality, it is, in fact, quite remarkable that very few controversial issues of this nature ever surfaced among the NECC students and never developed into divisive patterns. The very diver-

sity of the student body seemed to protect the institution.

The students of 1973 addressed the allegation of “apathy” in rather diverse and interesting ways. In October, they showed their far-reaching compassion by responding to an *Observer* appeal for assistance to the victims of a catastrophic fire in Chelsea, MA. They collected and sent food and clothing to those affected. They also collected used furniture and provided supplies and free labor to help set up Link House, Inc., a halfway-house serving eleven communities in the Amesbury-Newburyport region. The chairman of the campaign to establish Link House was Nicholas Costello of Amesbury, who served as a member of both houses of the state legislature and who took a lively and supportive interest in the welfare of the college and its students. At the same time *The Observer* was promoting the great environmental cause of recycling paper, aluminum, and other materials, and it noted the forming of two new student groups, the International Club and the Christian Alliance Club.

Yet there were some dark spots on the campus of “Still More Light” during academic year 1973-1974. The student newspaper was in trouble; *The Observer* which appeared on February 8, 1974 was the product of a record staff of only seven students! Their product was a particularly radical issue, full of ads for parties featuring alcoholic beverages, complaints over the rules for the use of college athletic equipment, and protests over the process of registration (including a call that the registrar should immediately resign). A clue to some of this general discontent was contained in one of the feature articles of that issue:

### **NECCO interviews anonymous Hop Head**

In this first issue of 1974 we at NECCO are beginning a series of interviews with the controversial people in today's society so that we can bring into the open their ideas and attitudes concerning life in America today from the point of view of the counter-culture. For our first interview we have chosen one of society's guiltless criminals, one who leaves no victim to his crime but himself. The self-confessed Hop Head.

The tone of the times was evident in these representative excerpts:

NECCO: What if someone gets a bad reaction?

HH: You mean a bad trip? Well, grass is what's considered a mild hallucinogen. When one's perception is altered to such a degree that he sees newness, things appear and run through his mind following new paths, his associative reactions don't work, he experiences reality through the eyes of a child, so to speak. This heightened awareness can be frightening, particularly if you have recent memories of the “eleven o'clock report” and even more so if even normal awareness has you emotionally disturbed. I would be careful who I turned on for more reasons than one.

NECCO: You could happen to turn on the “man.”

HH: Quite true. Never turn on someone you don't know well, as he may turn out to be a “narc.” A “narc” has to be one of

the world's most lowly creatures. He will smoke your dope, smile along with you about the groovie, powerful stash you have, then he'll turn around and bust you keeping a little of your dope so he can split it with his "narc" friends. Nixon would make an excellent narc.

The small *Observer* staff also became less prolific; there were only a few issues produced during academic years 1973-1974 and 1974-1975, years which reflected a heightened interest in ideology and its reflection in student journalism. The student body was changing rapidly as large numbers of the previously described "nontraditional" students began to enroll. There was an undeclared but very real struggle over what the students wanted and how and by whom they should be represented. Two barometers of this great change were the phasing out of the practice of having elected "class officers," and the simultaneous dropping of the "class yearbook," the *Lumen*, which made its last appearance in 1974. There simply no longer was a majority of recent high-school graduates, who would begin and finish their associate degree programs together, sharing many extra-curricular activities, imbued with "school spirit," and desirous of having a book as a memento of their shared experiences. To the "physical separation" of the faculty, there was added the fragmentation of clustering in the host of new programs, and the great diversity of age, background, and interests of the new generation of students.

Early in the spring semester 1974, it was necessary to hold special elections to fill five vacancies on the Student Council. The outcome was reported as follows:

'Newly Formed Party Sweeps Election.' Five out of five seats on the Student Council were captured by the newly formed Student Activist Party in last Friday's special election (which marked) the largest turnout for an election in recent history at NECC. *Observer*, February 22, 1974

That "largest turnout" amounted to only 254 ballots, well less than twenty percent of the student body. The "newly formed party" was, in fact, the campaign strategy of the Veterans' Club, which realized that organization and group solidarity could be easily converted into a "sweep," given the non-participation of most members of the Student Government Association. It was a classic lesson in effective political strategy.

It was also part of the background for extended animosity between the Student Council and *The Observer*. The editorial policies and even the choice of topics covered by the paper were criticized and resented especially by the Veteran's faction. Events came to a head in the fall of 1974 when, one evening, *The Observer* office was vandalized, copy slashed or removed, and a camera taken. Almost immediately, the entire staff of the newspaper resigned and it came under new management with a larger staff which promised to change the climate. By the spring of 1975, *The Observer* had persuaded Professor Betty Arnold to become its chief advisor and it turned a corner toward being recognized for fairness, impartiality, and comprehensive reflection of the student body. For the next ten years, *The Observer* built

and maintained an extraordinary tradition of journalistic excellence.

Late in the spring semester of 1975, *The Observer* began to alert the college community that hard times were coming. President Bentley, who was about to retire, had been informed that the Massachusetts economy was going to require a sudden drastic cutback in state funding for Fiscal Year 1976, which was about to begin. All of public higher education in the



Commonwealth was being told that funds would be reduced by 10 percent - a veritable amputation of existing programs, services, and staff. This economic bombshell, which did, in fact, explode in July, 1975, was the first greeting and first great challenge to confront NECC's incoming President, John R. Dimity. The crisis was intense during that July and August. Being on vacation, most of the students escaped the worst of the spectres. But when they returned to the campus in September, they found their share of anxiety also. The headline of the September 25, 1975 edition of *The Observer* read: "Budget Crunch Hits: NECC Tightens Belt."

The budget cuts that were ultimately mandated ended up closer to five percent than the originally threatened 10 percent. When Northern Essex, as part of its solution to the crisis, began to assess and collect the Instructional Materials Fee of one dollar per credit hour in all credit courses, the students did not protest. They were willing to pay their share of costs driven higher by inflation which the state appropriation could not meet. The concept of such a fee, first implemented at Northern Essex, was also quickly adopted by the MBRCC to help save the educational mission of all the other fourteen community colleges.

For academic year 1976-1977, there were some old concerns and some new ones also. The lead story of the October 5 *Observer* was entitled "Traffic Problems Frustrate Student Body." Traffic was one of the perennial problems, especially during the first few weeks of each new fall semester, until students had a chance to make car-pool arrangements. Bicycle and motorcycle racks appeared and, together with increasingly available bus transportation from the Merrimack Valley Regional Transit Authority, helped to alleviate the tangles in the parking lots. Enrollments, it was discovered, were greatly influenced by the prevailing economic conditions; the unemployed (of whom there were many in 1976) began to look to Northern Essex for job-training programs, and to come to the campus in

large numbers, adding their vehicles and needs for classrooms to a facility already bursting at the seams.

The first *Observer* of 1976, whose student staff had risen to 34 members, continued to reflect a growing conservatism. It ran an editorial on the much debated topic of capital punishment which practically called for a return of the *lex talionis*:

Do away with these severely disturbed outcasts before they do away with our 'great' society. (*Observer*, October 5, 1976)

To some extent, they were also moving away from the favorite causes of social action of earlier students: both the Big Brother/Big Sister Club and the Consumer Protection Center were closed down in 1976 because the Student Council, which allocated the Student Activities Fee budget, was no longer able to grant funds to clubs whose beneficiaries were persons other than NECC students.

A variety of student-perceived problems in the autumn of 1976 led to the last instance of student protest demonstrations. During the first week of December, about one hundred students marched from the College Center over to the Classroom Building, where the President was conducting a meeting with the faculty. They burst into Lecture Hall A and began listing their complaints: plans to take space away from the Game Room and Student Lounge and assign it as office space; the hassle of "closed courses;" the sequence of registration (Liberal Arts students always being last to register); insufficient parking spaces; denial of funds for the Music Club; the cutoff of funding for the Big Brother/Big Sister Club and the Consumer Protection Center. The headline of the December 9 *Observer* was a mixture of aplomb and uncertainty: "Students Confront Dimitry - An End to Apathy?"

This intrusion into the faculty meeting was defused when, having allowed the protestors a few minutes of the agenda, the President offered to discuss these and any other concerns in a separate meeting, a "Forum for Discussion of Student Concerns" where the Student Council could more fully present its grievances to President Dimitry, Dean of Students Church Stafford and Dean of Administration John Palmucci. That special forum was quickly arranged, but not totally amicable. Changes were promised on some items over which the administration did have real control; other grievances were shown to be related to inadequate state funding.

When the spring semester of 1977 began, NECC faced the prospect of a faculty strike, rooted in a different impasse: the fact that the state government was dragging its feet on paying increases in faculty salary (frozen since 1973) to which it had contractually agreed the previous July. The Student Council met and voted to support and rally the whole student body to support the strike, if it were called. The major topic of *The Observer* edition of February 4, 1977 was the imminent strike and student backing of it. Fortunately, an agreement was reached at the last minute and the desperate (and illegal) "job action" did not materialize. Subsequent issues that spring continued to report downbeat news: the budget prospects for fiscal year 1978 were exceptionally bleak; there was an outpouring of grief over the sudden death of Frank Jarvis, a member of the English Department

whose life and teaching had been an inspiration to students and colleagues alike; there was a telephone “bomb scare” on March 8 which necessitated the evacuation of all campus buildings for several hours and which also led to dissatisfaction over emergency procedures and repeated demands for comprehensive “Disaster Planning.” It was almost like the approach of Doomsday.

All in all, it was a discouraging spring. The April 22 edition of *The Observer* carried a lead story called “Dimitry Pleads for Dollars,” which summarized an appeal for better funding made directly to Senator Sharon Pollard and nine state representatives during one of the first meetings which were to evolve into a new NECC strategy and tradition, the “Legislators’ Meetings,” a tradition which was destined to bring at first some minor relief and ultimately some really effective new state support for the college. Much of the discussion at this first Legislators’ meeting focused on the relationship between NECC and those of its students who resided in New Hampshire (estimated at that time to number 700). Some of the lawmakers present voiced objection to “subsidizing” the education of New Hampshire residents. President Dimitry called attention to the existence and binding power of a regional agreement called the New England Compact which provided in specific instances for charging out-of-state students the in-state tuition rate. He described it as an “unfavorable balance of trade” from the viewpoint of the Commonwealth. This interpretation was not well received by *The Observer*, which ran a very critical editorial called “Will the Door Be Closed to New Hampshire Students?”

Academic year 1977-78 got off to an early start; in order to complete the fall semester prior to Christmas, classes began on August 29. This schedule, which ran in the face of the Labor Day tradition and student summer job commitments, did not become part of the NECC tradition. But some other changes did. Instead of the previous custom of including just one “student-activity period” (a two-hour block at midday on Wednesday), the noon hour on Mondays and Fridays was also removed from the master schedule of classes, so as to provide more opportunity for student life.

*The Observer* also got off to a quick start - so quick that it even published on the very first day of classes, August 29. The edition was upbeat. It told of the appointment of a new Student Activities Director, Rick Nastri, of a new Office of Placement and Career Services under Richard Pastor, of expanding student health services under a new coordinator, Phyllis Hare, of a new elevator in the Applied Science Building for students with disabilities, and of a new attempt to build student solidarity and sharing through the use of “clusters” in the Liberal Arts program. In his message of welcome to new and returning students, President Dimitry issued an invitation for all students to go beyond mere enrollment in courses:

There is much, much more available to all Northern Essex students. Take the time, this semester, to explore the campus; talk to faculty and administrators; think about taking part in some of the varied phases of College life ... your years at NECC can be “living learning” as well as educational learning. (*Observer* August 29, 1977)

That “much, much more” was reflected in a myriad of activities: pool, soccer, darts, plays, musical performances, basketball, baseball, fencing, jogging, marathon running, mixers, fitness programs, bloodmobiles, and much else. The fall of 1977 saw the creation of the Soccer Club and the Dance Club, which immediately began to rehearse for a public performance called “Still Point.” Under the dynamic leadership of Professor Elaine Mawhinney, it became an outstanding annual event.

Despite a general desire to have an upbeat year, however, academic year 1977-1978 turned out only slightly more positive than the preceding year. Returning students were saddened by the death during the summer of Professor Charles Foster, who had introduced and coordinated the Respiratory Therapy program. They were upset over the academic calendar (the subject of an *Observer* editorial of August 29, “Uncaring Attitude Persists”) and even more upset that 65 sections of courses for which they had preregistered the previous spring were cancelled as the semester began. Another editorial in the same issue employed headline-size letters to ask impatiently, “Where Have All the Courses Gone?” Accompanied by a cartoon in which one student exclaims, “Oh No!” and another, “What’s with this college?,” this editorial pilloried the administration for “false advertis-



ing,” poor planning, and failing “to be responsive to student needs.”

The real reason for all the course cancellations, however, was the unpredictable state budget process and the ongoing financial crunch. What had appeared “do-able” in March or April often became, in those lean years, “undo-able” when the college budget was finally appropriated in June, July, August, or later. The fiscal year 1978 budget was, in fact, so bad that the November 8 edition of *The Observer* carried the traumatic news “Eleven Staffers Get Axe;” some college employees were laid off and morale declined again. In many classes there was overcrowding; as many as 50 students might be present for a course whose meeting room was designed and equipped for 35. The mood was more of mere survival than

of dramatic innovations; it was almost like a group rehearsal for the Great Blizzard of February, 1978, which perhaps best symbolized that particular year. .

As the decade of the seventies approached its close, there was much testimony to controversy, challenge, and change. There was a growing awareness of problems connected with substance abuse. In October of 1978, *The Observer* reported ("Church mows grass") on a strict new policy prohibiting marijuana from the campus. It also carried a story called "Stafford Shuts Down WRAZ," which explained that the Dean of Students had suspended the operation of the college radio station because it had broken certain agreements concerning its volume levels in the college cafeteria. In these and other ways, it seemed as if Church Stafford, long and affectionately thought of as most sympathetic toward student freedoms, had put aside his traditional posture as the institutional "Mr. Easy" and had gone over to the side of rules enforcement in the name of majority wishes. When he retired in 1980, after nearly 15 years as Dean of Students, Church left an irreplaceable legacy to that office, just as he had won an irreplaceable spot in the hearts and memories of succeeding generations of NECC students. Much of the institutional spirit of patience, compassion, tolerance, and personal encouragement for every student was his direct contribution. Fortunately, when student-oriented "pioneers" such as Church, Don Ruhl, and Cecilia "Sparky" Furlotte left NECC, their shoes were filled by colleagues who had worked with them and shared their values. For Norman Landry, Bob McDonald, and Betty Coyne, working on behalf of students in the eighties was very much a matter of preserving the personal warmth, approachability, and caring exemplified by their predecessors.

That same semester continued to witness low participation in student elections (six percent turned out at the polls on February 21 that year, giving the Veterans' club a clean sweep) and also the last gasp of the "lean years." An *Observer* report of February 20 lamented the news that "King orders \$40 million cut" from the public higher education budget for FY 1980. The Governor's office, from 1975-1980, did not appear to NECC students to be continuing the friendly disposition toward them connected with the tradition of generous benevolence of earlier Governors Furcolo, Volpe, and Sargent. Both Michael Dukakis and Edward King were almost constant subjects of negative editorials and cartoons over short-funding, tuition hikes, and other concerns, such as the legal age of drinking in the Commonwealth.

When academic year 1979-80 began, other changes in student life emerged. There was increased interest in the world beyond the campus, and *The Observer* began expanded coverage of state, national, and world news. It also published book and record reviews and informed its readers of current entertainment happenings as far away as Boston and Worcester. It noted a proposal for a new plus-minus grading system (implemented five years later) and also the college's reception of a \$6,000 federal grant for its work with the Haverhill Neighborhood Alliance. It also announced the naming of Northern Essex as the New England Center of Gallaudet College. In that fall semester, Student Council election participation rose to 8%, and while the Drama Society was rehearsing its production of "Night Must Fall," mixers were relocated off-campus and were privately spon-



sored so as to relieve the college of the burden of enforcing the state's laws about the drinking age. Toward the end of the semester, the prevalent conservatism was even reflected in an *Observer* editorial which protested a recent decision to extend the period in which students could withdraw from courses with a non-punitive "W" grade. The editorial, "What's Happening to Standards?" included this surprising verdict:

The recent downgrading of academic standards here at NECC is making it a little too easy. (*Observer*, December 11, 1979)

Still more changes and new issues marked the start of the new decade. The first edition of *The Observer* in 1980 (February 12) carried the headline, "Dimitry Pushes For High Technology" and feature stories on recognizing the havoc wrought by agent orange, registration for the draft, Joseph Glasser and his contributions as Director of the Center for Business and Industry, speculation on whether the passage of the ERA amendment would or should entail military conscription of women. In February, the newspaper's editors were still asking the question "Is it Apathy?", as they reported that only 156 students had exercised their right to vote in Student Council elections. The Dance Club was busy polishing its performance for "Still Point VI," which it dedicated to the memory of Professor Charles Reilly, Chairman of the Division of Communications and Humanities. Mr. Reilly had served the college in many important capacities, and his sudden passing had caused reflection on the profounder question of fixity and flux. The powerful lines from T.S. Eliot's poem *Burnt Norton* were spoken and danced in a mood of reverent contemplation:

At the still point of the turning world.  
Neither flesh nor flesh less;  
Neither from nor towards;  
    at the Still Point,  
there the dance is . . .

While the campus community was frozen in that still point, external events moved on. By late spring of 1980, there were increasing rumors of an imminent major reorganization of all of public higher education in the Commonwealth. And there was encouraging news that the state's five-year-old fiscal crisis must be, finally, nearly over, for *The Observer* reported on April 22, 1980 that the Massachusetts House of Representatives had just voted NECC a budget increase of ten percent for Fiscal 1981.

What the left hand might give, however, the right hand of government might take away; the May 6 issue of *The Observer* predicted a ten percent reduction in the amount of federal funding for the College Work-Study program, which was another educational experience for many NECC students. The federal government granted the college nearly 2.1 million dollars for this purpose from 1971 to 1985. More than 2,600 students qualified for this financial benefit, which averaged out to represent \$787 per participant. The program was administered successively by Susan Horowitz, Michael Kaplon, and Richard Pastor. It was a boon for the students and also for the

college, especially during the long years of chronic understaffing; students did much of the work that otherwise could not have been done. They contributed to groundskeeping and janitorial maintenance, to tutoring and secretarial services. It was convenient employment and it meant that an average of 190 students per year could help the college between or after their classes, often in functions where they acquired new skills and always in situations where they came to feel more a part of the college community. The peak years for work-study were from 1975 to 1977. Fortunately, by the time the grants began to be cut back, employment possibilities in the local economy had greatly improved, and many students were employed in internships arranged by the college Cooperative Education program, formerly headed by Dr. Abbott Rice, and later by Deborah Scire. Whether through work/study, co-op ed, or on their own private initiative, the students of the seventies and eighties were employed to a much higher degree than their predecessors of the sixties. Many full-time students were working at least 25 hours per week in addition to their college schedules; many of them had to, simply to make ends meet. Others chose to do so to finance families, transportation, amusement, or further education. The faculty and counseling staff were often forced into asking students if they had not really taken on too much. The impact on their participation in extracurricular life at NECC was direct and limiting. Perhaps some of the recurring questions about “student apathy” could be answered on this basis.

During the summer of 1980, the state legislature carried out a complete restructuring of public higher education in the Commonwealth; it created a new agency, the Board of Regents of Higher Education, to coordinate the work of the public post-secondary institutions, including Northern Essex. There was an atmosphere of new beginnings, new confidence.



Most of the news of academic 1980-1981 was upbeat. In October, the Northern Essex Community College Foundation announced its scholarship program and transfer became easier for some graduates with the signing of a “two-plus-two” (years) agreement with the University of Lowell. *The Observer* ran an editorial about not cutting classes, and it reflected a changed mood in society at large with an article entitled “Old Glory Flies Again.”

After Election Day (November 4), there began the new eras of Proposition 2-1/2 and President Reagan, together with the legislative career of a meteoric new star in the constellation of state government, Senator Patricia McGovern of Lawrence. The Drama Society was staging a comedy,

*Gallons Humor*, and a musical, *Pippin*, which it performed at Bradford College's Denworth Hall. The Contemporary Affairs Society was preparing for its fourteenth annual visit to New York, to take part in the 1980 Model United Nations. The UN trip was another small piece of the total mosaic of NECC student life. Each year from 1967 onward, a small delegation of NECC students undertook this challenging experience. With the advice and coaching of their successive moderators, John Guarino, Gerry Morin, Chet Hawrylcw, and James McCosh, NECC students learned about and represented a wide variety of nations: Ethiopia, The Philippines, Paraguay, Iran, Italy, Mongolia, Uganda, Cambodia, Nepal, Guatemala, Haiti, Greece, Luxembourg, and Burma. For a "regional" community college, NECC was both geographically and ideologically globally involved. Several years, the UN ambassadors of the nations represented sent letters of commendation back to the college, congratulating the NECC students on their careful preparation and performance. The Student Council, in making its annual appropriations, could always be certain that funds it allocated to make the Model UN trip possible would enhance both the education of NECC students and the college's reputation.

As 1980 came to a close, interest in NECC and its student body was evidenced by the visits of three important state officials: two of them, Ray Stata and Dr. Charles Sanders, members of the newly appointed Board of Regents and the third, George Kariotis, the Commonwealth's Secretary of Economic Development. His theme, expressed in *The Observer's* December 9 headline, was "Manpower training 'making it' in Massachusetts."

Other happenings, both major and minor, were also occurring in that semester. A February heat wave produced (again) a soggy sea in the "Mudflats;" the lot, in fact, became so mushy it was closed temporarily, adding more ammunition to the case for state funding to pave it. The Board of Regents was preparing to take over from the MBRCC on March 1, and on February 28, Governor King swore in the eight local residents whom he had chosen as NECC's first Board of Trustees. Coincidentally, the Drama Society was working on its spring production, a play written by a local actor, Richard Seguin, and bearing the timely title *Getting Acquainted*. The NECC Foundation contributed \$800 for the purchase of a new stage curtain for the Top Notch Theatre and a newly formed organization, the Francis J. Bevilacqua Scholarship Foundation, announced an annual scholarship program for Northern Essex students planning to enter careers in public service. In 1985, a similar scholarship program was to be established to honor the memory and public service of James P. Rurak. Thus, the two Haverhill legislators who had done so much for the establishment of NECC in 1960 (and for its subsequent development) continued to encourage civic spirit among NECC students.

The year 1981 was marked by an outbreak of violence against world leaders: the assassination of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and the nearly successful attempts on the lives of President Reagan and Pope John Paul II. These horrifying events caused renewed student discussion of gun control measures and seemed to eclipse the anxiety over tuition levels and strike threats. Life had to go on, and there were many new challenges as it did so. In November, it was announced that the student body could implement recently passed legislation entitling it to elect one student as a

member of the Board of Trustees, and a special election for this purpose was called for December 8-10. After a spirited campaign among several contenders, the honor of being the first student trustee went to one of the "nontraditional" students, Achilles Tsantarliotis, a recent immigrant from Greece.

In December 1981, the college community mourned the death of Professor John Mainer, the sensitive poet and English teacher who had also served as the pioneer advisor to the Choral Society in the sixties. Early in 1982, a new chief of campus traffic and security, retired Judge Gino Mattozzi, arrived with his easy-going ambiance. In the same month, Wendy Shaffer joined Mary Wilson, then Director of Development as Assistant Director, and together they raised millions of dollars in grant funds in collaboration with all areas of the college.

Spring of 1982 was also the semester when the Drama Society staged an outstanding production of Sophocles' *Antigone*, in which King Creon steadfastly refuses to change his mind. While that classic was in rehearsal in early February, incumbent Governor King did reverse his earlier call for continued "level funding" for public higher education and instead called for an increase of 40 million dollars, including an eighteen percent increase for the budget for Northern Essex for fiscal year 1983. Part of the increase was to be provided by enhanced tuition income, for on March 16, 1982, *The Observer* reported the decision of the Board of Regents (which would not have a student as a member until 1986) to raise tuition at the community colleges from \$542 to \$634 the following September. This raise did not engender any massive protest. If it had, the argument of any protesters would have been immensely weakened in April, when the newspaper reported that the video-games in the College Center were taking in \$625 per week and *The Observer* staff were devoting cartoons and editorials to how much time and money were being "wasted" by some students. *The Observer* had changed in many respects over the years, but it always remained true to its original philosophy of being a gadfly not just on the college administration and faculty, but on the students themselves.

For several years, the amount of controversy in its pages steadily decreased, even as the sheer size of the paper and its staff increased. It has supported particularly the cause of the performing arts on campus, with steady extensive coverage of all guest performances as well as the regular student productions of the Drama Society, Music Club, and Still Point Dancers. It frequently spoke out for NECC to allocate funds in these areas and not just for computers or other high-tech equipment. In the autumn of 1982, it reported a record Day Division enrollment of 3,594 students and 5,000 students in DCE.

Academic year 1982-1983 was a relatively quiet, "business-as-usual" type of year. Perhaps colleges, as well as individuals, require an occasional breather to offset their normal hectic pace. There was considerable speculation that year about the possible development of a High Technology Park on the Atwood Estate adjacent to the Haverhill Campus. In October, Senator Edward Kennedy visited the campus to address the 500 members of the National Association of Retired Federal Employees who held a conference here. Some students were busy rehearsing the play *Arms and the Man* and others were trying to organize a varsity football team. During

the spring semester, work began on the revision of the constitution of the Student Government Association and the faculty were preoccupied with the problem of choosing between the Massachusetts Teachers Association (MTA) and the Massachusetts Federation of Teachers (MFT) as their collective bargaining agent. In March 1983, then State Representative (and later State Senator) Nicholas Costello invited the Still Point Dancers to perform in the rotunda of the State House on Beacon Hill. When the NECC dance troupe did its magic under the "Golden Dome" on April 5, the image of the community college and its mission as a cultural center was reinforced in the minds of that important audience, the state legislature. One had to be visible to be funded.

The attention of NECC was also turned toward Africa in the spring of 1983, since students were representing Kenya in the Model United Nations. A much larger group of students would work on the problems of East Africa two years later, in a major effort to raise funds for relief of



famine victims in Ethiopia. At home, however, life was much more of a feast than a famine. The March 15, 1983 *Observer* showed how the Student Council had allocated the Student Activities Funds budget (\$165,000) for that year. The total college budget for 1961-1962 had only amounted to \$92,300.

Academic year 1983-1984 was launched on a very festive note on September 6, when more than 1,200 new students took part in a rejuvenated Orientation Day which included information sessions, campus tours, meeting with academic advisors, music, a barbeque, and an "outrageous obstacle course" set up in the quadrangle. On the next day, classes began and the nature of the challenge for students became more intellectual than physical.

For the rest of the college community, the challenge became psychic.

At an early staff meeting, reported in *The Observer* edition of September 27, President Dimitry had to inform employees of the very likely prospect of “payless paydays” in October due to a “log jam” in the state budget machinery. The issue of merit pay, was producing an impasse, which was to haunt the entire year, in negotiations for a new faculty contract. Readers of that edition, however, could take some consolation in how supportive the learning climate had been in the previous semester. The Dean’s list for spring 1983 took an entire page to print; it listed the names of 723 students who had achieved a semester grade point average higher than 3.0. Nearly one-quarter of the total Day Division student body of 3,388 was listed.

As early as 1978, Dr. Dimitry had advanced the concept of Northern Essex offering daytime classes in the city of Lawrence. On May 1, 1984 *The Observer*, in an article called “Bring Northern Essex to the Students,” noted a renewed desire to turn that concept into the reality of delivering educational services there. No one, at that point, was predicting the outbreak of street violence which took place in Lawrence in August and which drew first national media attention and then state governmental attention and funding for the obvious needs of the city; implementation of a role for Northern Essex in Lawrence was on the near horizon.

May of 1984 was also a time when the college was looking not just up-river, but literally across the sea. Spearheaded by Dr. Usha Sellers, Chairperson of the Division of Social Sciences, an International Studies Committee had explored possibilities for NECC students to pursue part of their studies in foreign countries. The carefully planned Study Abroad Program was moving from design to operation. The May 15, 1984 *Observer* noted: “Jim Healey launches NECC Semester Abroad.” He was scheduled to go in September to London’s Ealing College, to be the pioneer student in a small, but growing and important effort to weave internationalism into the fabric of the “regional” community college.

In the fall of 1984, Jim Healey did make it to London, and Northern Essex made it to Lawrence. The front page of *The Observer* issue of September 25, 1984 was an announcement of a new program entitled LEEP (the Lawrence Education-Employment Project). Strongly supported by the city, the state legislature and the Board of Regents, the college received special funding of \$226,500 to begin to bring new opportunity to Lawrence residents, especially to the Hispanic community. Focused mainly on providing job skills, this program broke totally new ground for Massachusetts community colleges, which until then had never succeeded in obtaining any state funding for community-service activities. The program, which was designed during the fall of 1984 became operational in January, 1985 and served thousands of Lawrence residents. Its announcement in September, 1984 helped to create a new sense of caring and social responsibility in the NECC student body at large. *The Observer*, for example, ran a lengthy, soul-searching editorial, “Am I my brother’s keeper?”, which concluded with the following message:

Contact President Dimitry to find out what you can do to promote the NECC/ Lawrence Project and help enrich the quality of life for those less fortunate. To that end, I *am* my brother’s keeper, and he is mine. (*Observer*, September, 1984)

There was also a great deal of other important institutional news as the college began its twenty-fourth year. A new grading system, including plus and minus factors, had been proposed by Professor Thelma Halberstadt of the Department of Nursing and it took effect as the academic year opened. There was also a major revision of the constitution of the Student Government Association. It replaced the traditional Student Council, whose members had always been elected at-large, with a new, fifteen-member Student Senate, elected on the principle of representation according to academic program areas. These general areas, and the number of seats received in the Senate were: Liberal Arts (5); Health and Human Services (2); Business (5); Technology (3). This new constitution, which replaced the one originally adopted in 1964, contained the interesting provision that this representation by academic program areas would be adjusted each year, based on current enrollment distributions to ensure equitable representation of all students.

Over the years, and particularly so after 1975, wonderful opportunities for feeding the soul as well as the mind had been evolving in the Creative Arts Series which was the special concern and contribution of Professor Elaine Mawhinney. It was a combination of both faculty and student talent, outside performers, institutional encouragement, and Student Activities funding support. The smorgasbord grew in both the number and variety of its offerings. On February 12, 1985, a full two-page spread in *The Observer* was required to list and briefly describe what was available to be enjoyed throughout the semester at NECC during student activity periods or the weekends. In addition to a weekly Hollywood film series, there were three events for children, two dance performances, four musical programs, a student art exhibit, three forms of dramatic productions, and two visual arts programs.

That same issue of February 12 also featured an editorial on the frequently recurring theme of students becoming active beyond the classroom. Entitled "Motivated students get involved," it opened with a question and closed with an answer:

What do you as a student want to accomplish while at Northern Essex? You alone must take the initiative to attain your goal ... Not only does your education increase at Northern Essex, your self-improvement and self-esteem abound. But YOU must start the process.

Just two weeks later, *The Observer* could begin to report on an explosion of student motivation to do something tangible for the famine victims of Ethiopia. One student, Paula Fuoco, had an idea. She knew what she wanted to accomplish and took the initiative. She brought a 35-page proposal for a two-week effort called "Feed the World Weeks" to the Student Senate. The February 26 *Observer* headline announced, "Northern Essex Hosts Feed the World Weeks" and highlighted Paula's appeal, "This is a time for us to rally together for a cause." The period April 1 through April 14 was chosen and a student committee of twenty members emerged overnight and began to plan a fantastic program that was in small part a celebration of spring and in much larger part a summons to love. How could anyone

ignore her message:

There are children dying every single day and, because of that, something inside each one of us should suffer also. We've forgotten the time when people rallied together for a cause and didn't carry around the "me-first" attitude. This is a chance for us to break the mood of apathy that's so prevalent on college campuses today and promote a spirit of unselfishness. (Observer, February 26, 1985)

Ignore it they didn't. For the next month-and-a-half the campus buzzed with a joyful excitement as individuals and groups sketched and planned a myriad of ways to help the fundraising. A special invitation to participate was sent to Governor Michael Dukakis and, although unable to attend, he found the project so inspiring that he issued a special proclamation designating April 1-14 as "Feed the World Weeks" in Massachusetts for years to come and encouraged colleges throughout the Commonwealth to join in the effort annually and urged "the citizens of the Commonwealth to take cognizance of this event and participate fittingly in its observance."

Feed the World Weeks became a many-faceted response to a dramatic human need. The ESL students organized an International Food Festival; the Behavioral Sciences Club put on a bake sale; the college radio station, WRAZ, held a "Dance Your Lunch Hour Away," a donation table with a display of the conditions in Africa was set up in the tiled lounge; a spring fashion show on April 9 was followed the next day by Professor James Bradley's reflections on love, a Grandma's Bake Sale, and a panel discussion on hunger in America, the last organized by Life Long Learning. On Thursday, April 11, there was "Tonight is for Ethiopia," a dynamite evening of special music and dance. On Friday, April 12, then Haverhill Mayor William Ryan spoke, the Dance Club and classes performed, and WRAZ contributed a gong show. Finally on Sunday evening, April 14, the proceeds from Professor Michael Finegold's flute recital were donated to the cause.

When the balance sheets were struck, all of these events had netted just over \$1,500, which was contributed to Oxfam America for the African relief effort. The spiritual uplift and the campus solidarity which emerged in the two-week period were perhaps even more valuable than the donation itself. Just as one man had come to Haverhill in 1960 with the idea that created NECC, one student in 1985 had seized a problem and turned it into an opportunity. The effect in both cases exceeded the originator's initial imaginings. The special magic of simple enthusiasm for a worthy ideal was too contagious to contain. It overflowed into many people, including two members of the NECC chorale and music club, lyricist David Dunham and composer Bob Jacobucci, who collaborated to produce a new song for Feed the World Weeks. Northern Essex does not have an official school song, but if it were to adopt one, it could very well be their number, "Don't Turn Away."

Student life at Northern Essex during the seventies and eighties was a kaleidoscope and a roller-coaster; it was loneliness and it was togetherness. But whatever else it was, it was more conversion than aversion.



## Reorganization of Governance: 1975-1985

Throughout its first decade, Northern Essex was, as a student of 1972 said, “a friendly little college.” It assumed that the money to carry out its mission would always be there, that work conditions would always feature trust and contentment, and that the institution would always enjoy a high degree of autonomy in setting its goals and policies.

Many things changed during the seventies and eighties. The three early assumptions all proved unfounded. The money dried up, work conditions turned into labor relations, and goals and policies came more and more to be determined by the superstructure beyond the college community. An entirely new vocabulary, almost a new language, emerged to reflect the increasing complexity of the times. Philosophically, Northern Essex might have chosen many ways to realize its mission. Practically, it did what it could within the limitations created by budgets, collective bargaining agreements, and external directives. Analysis of the state appropriations and the total operational budgets for each of the years from 1960 to 1986 provides the following interesting patterns:

1. The ratio between tuition rates and state appropriations remained fairly constant over the years. In 1971-72, for example, tuition was at \$200 per year and the state appropriation was \$2,344,439. For 1983-84, tuition was at \$634 per year and the appropriation was \$6,920,358.
2. The state appropriation multiplied by a factor of 85 from its meager base of \$81,866 (FY1962) to \$6,920,358 (FY1984), while the total operational budget, which includes all funding from federal and state grants, vocational education funds and special grants of the governing board, grew 116 times from \$81,866 (FY1962) to \$9,556,447 (FY1984).

3. During these same years, the number of students served rose from 186 to 9,000, a multiple of nearly 50. Inflation in the national economy over the 22-year period was the largest factor in this pattern of budget growth rate exceeding the rate of enrollment growth, even though both were remarkable.
4. Institutional resources grew remarkably during the sixties and early seventies, virtually doubling every two years. A "famine interval" (FY 1974-78) saw level funding or even, in one year (FY1976), reduced funding, despite the inflation which was then rampant. Steady, although less dramatic, budget growth resumed for the period FY1979-86.
5. Between 1975 and 1985, close to thirty percent of all available wherewithal was in the form of "soft money," i.e., state or federal grants. This posed a need to be constantly aware of undertaking service roles which might be in future jeopardy if cutbacks occurred at the state or federal levels. Concern over such cutbacks, particularly at the federal level, is a major institutional worry. Once delivered, services tend to become an expectation of constituents. One shudders to think of a scenario in which nearly one-third of the college's mission could be impossible to fulfill. Fortunately, the overall track record is most encouraging. When a societal need has been justified, governmental agencies have been there to support it.

Viewed as part of a total state system of community colleges, the Northern Essex growth rate, particularly in terms of enrollments, was atypically large. In March and in April of 1986, the Boston *Sunday Globe* ran a three-part series on the history and current situation of the Massachusetts community colleges. The final installment of this series (April 6, 1986) included the following summary:

*Community College Chart: Enrollment figures below reflect a head count compiled by the Board of Regents staff for the day division only*

<u>Year</u>	<u>No. of colleges</u>	<u>State funds</u>	<u>Enrollment</u>
1960	1	\$25,000	152
1965	9	\$3 million	5,980
1970	13	\$14 million	18,911
1985	15	\$100 million	38,554

As this data shows, the system-wide growth rate during these twenty-five years was thirty-threefold for budgets and close to sevenfold for enrollments, while at Northern Essex the comparable growth rates (1965-1983) were nineteenfold and close to sixfold. During its early years, Northern Essex had expanded its student body very rapidly, while its budget had experienced relatively slow expansion. To some extent, this was due to conscious efforts towards cost efficiency within the institution. To a large extent, it was because before the reorganization of 1980, the state appropriations for higher education were determined more by political influence than by the reality of enrollment distributions. Most of the time,

the leadership of the state legislature was exercised by persons outside the Northern Essex region and created long-standing inequity. After 1980, local legislators such as Senators Sharon Pollard, Chester Atkins, and Patricia McGovern rose to positions which enhanced funding possibilities for Northern Essex. The new Board of Regents, in its allocation of a unified educational budget, also began to weigh the enrollment factor heavily; as either the largest (or some semesters, the second largest) community college in the system, Northern Essex gradually came to benefit from a less political, more rational distribution formula, which included some provision for academic program budgeting and also for certain courses with high built-in cost factors.

The concluding article of the *Globe's* series was written by Marty Carlock and was entitled "Community Colleges: Earning Respect - Giving Students, Industry What They Need." It reported on a variety of aspects of Massachusetts community colleges, quoting NECC's Professor Paula Strangie on the current challenges of teaching and President John Dimitry on some of the economic challenges, particularly the costly impact of state-mandated tuition waivers for some thirty different categories of citizens. Such waivers, he pointed out, also apply to the Division of Continuing Education, even though it is required by state law to be "self-supporting," as earlier described.

The financial basis of DCE is another very important economic factor in the life of the college. The "no cost to the Commonwealth" provision had historically driven tuition rates higher in DCE than in the Day Division. As the *Globe* noted, this means another kind of inequity: day students in 1986 were paying \$29.50 per credit hour, while DCE students paid from \$42 to \$104 per credit hour, depending on program costs. Other community college spokespersons mentioned in the *Globe* series cited other important economic factors as well. One president, remaining anonymous, contended that the Massachusetts community college system has been an "orphan child" because "This state has not supported public higher education per capita student, as in other states. We ranked 45th at one time: we have since climbed to 38th." And the President of Holyoke Community College, former Speaker of the State House of Representatives, David Bartley, stressed the same point: "Higher education has occupied 6-1/2 to 7-1/2 percent of the budget for a long time ... In other industrial states, it's 18 to 20 percent." President Bartley also called attention to the fact that the taxes paid by a community college graduate repay the state within five years for the cost of subsidizing his or her education. In these particulars, as in the series as a whole, the community college system is portrayed as one of the soundest investments ever made by the Commonwealth and perhaps even as "the secret ingredient in the Bay State's economic boom."

For the economics of Northern Essex, the secret ingredients have historically been the healthy growth of DCE and success in attracting funding from sources beyond the annual state appropriations. The operating expenses for NECC's Division of Continuing Education for fiscal years 1964 through 1986 reflect an amazing growth, many of the reasons for which have already been suggested. Essentially, revenues and expenses went from \$4,355 to \$2,007,026, an increase of nearly 140 fold over the 23-year period. Only three times, in FY1982, 1985 and 1986, were operating

expenses in excess of revenues. By prudent management, DCE succeeded in maintaining a small but significant positive trust-fund balance, which represented the only safety factor, the only real contingency reserve in the entire institutional budget.

There was compelling reason to maintain such a reserve. Everyone remembered the traumatic months of FY1976, when only the small DCE reserve had been barely able to keep the wolf of cutbacks and layoffs at bay. President Dimitry, at that time, expressed gratitude for the foresight of Harold Bentley in "squirreling away" that small cache which meant the difference between survival and starvation. It was a lesson well learned, and the policy of keeping a minimal reserve at the ready became an underlying institutional principle.

The great financial crisis of 1975 also caused the college to adopt a number of other long-term economic decisions and strategies. It encouraged the hiring of a larger percentage of part-time professional and staff employees, as a guard against future sudden layoffs of full-time personnel. This policy, widely adopted throughout higher education during the seventies, has been attended by considerable controversy, since, in general, part-time employees were on a lower salary scale, received little in the way of fringe benefits, and were ineligible for membership in the emerging collective bargaining units. Serious attention has been directed to these issues and, through the staff development program and the input of a committee of part-time employees, some significant progress has been achieved.

A second major strategy was diversification of resources. It was patently dangerous to have all of one's eggs in the volatile basket of state appropriations. Especially after 1975, the college moved to augment its regular budget with as many new funding sources as possible. Between 1975 and 1978, it secured more than 5.2 million dollars in ancillary grants for specific purposes. More and more the college administration had to come to grips with basic mathematics and the projected inadequacy of regular state funding. It needed to engage in long-range planning, close collaboration with government, mission adjustment, and aggressive grantsmanship.

These courses were already implicit by the end of 1976, when Dr. Dimitry prepared and circulated his first President's Report, a kind of state-of-the-college document, which concluded with these observations:

The challenges are many. Presently the community colleges educate approximately 30% of the students enrolled in public higher education in the State but they are provided with only 17% of the budget for public higher education ... The budget for next year shows a no-increase prospect, but inflation has increased our cost; overdue raises have been provided for our personnel and our career programs have increased.

It takes no mathematician to see that the only response left to stay within a "stand-pat budget" is to cut something somewhere. Of all the responsive mechanisms within the Merrimack Valley, Northern Essex is vital for those groups of people who have no other way of changing careers, or getting retraining from industries that have become redundant, or developing careers because of their

economic situation. These groups are the primary constituency of Northern Essex Community College.

The realism of this assessment was matched by a determination not to cut back, but in fact to find the necessary new resources to serve those groups. The challenges, indeed, were many. The response of NECC exemplified Arnold J. Toynbee's classic stimulus - response theory of the progress of civilizations. Many individuals within the college went to work to turn challenges into opportunities. The Financial Aid office, for example, increased its support network from \$200,000 in 1972 to \$2,217,797 in 1983. *The Observer* reported in December of 1977 on the receipt of a \$750,000 CETA grant, coordinated by Mel Silberberg, for training programs in a wide variety of new areas: Wastewater, Mobile Graphics, Project Secure, Project Tutor, Project Day Care, and Campus Beautification. The terminology for such programs would evolve over the years from "Manpower Training" to "Occupational Skills," but the ongoing creativity of staff members such as Mel Silberberg, Stephen Brown, and Meg Greenfield helped the college not only to address these needs, but also to secure funding for them.

During 1978-1979, Northern Essex completed its first systematic long-range planning document, the Master Plan, which charted goals and activities over a five-year period. As with its plan for Affirmative Action, NECC pioneered among the community colleges in this respect. The governing boards (then still the MBRCC and later the Regents) were to call for system wide adoption of the long-range approach, which, at Northern Essex had for years been associated with Norman Landry in his combined roles of Assistant to the President and Director of Institutional Research and Development. Gradually, others took an interest in this area and, as funding improved, new positions became available to support the planning and funding efforts. Specialization increased and the important contributions of Tom Fallon, Mary Wilson, and Wendy Shaffer were made possible. There were exits from and returns to the campus scene, sometimes due to the economic parameters, sometimes to other factors. Mel Silberberg and Mary Wilson left for extended periods to work in Boston, Mel for the State Department of Education and Mary for the MBRCC. Tom Fallon, after his part-time CETA position disappeared, transferred to Massasoit Community College, and then returned to NECC as Director of Institutional Research, before moving on as a staff member of the Board of Regents.

In some instances, the very success of key persons at Northern Essex in their quest for funding of new programs took them off the campus for extended periods, so that Northern Essex programs could be replicated elsewhere. In 1978-79, for example, Mary Wilson's pioneering work in human services programming resulted in a Title XX grant of more than one million dollars. This grant, administered under the Massachusetts Department of Public Welfare, took her to the MBRCC central office as Project Director for Title XX Programs. Programs in the fields of foster parent training, mental health, home-making, family day care, alcohol abuse, and services for the blind and elderly were also developed under the grant, which, by 1981, had brought more than five million dollars to these needs. Similarly, Rubin Russell, in 1979, secured Vocational Education funding for a program of in-service training for the staff and faculty of all fifteen Mas-

sachusetts community colleges to help them work more effectively with students having physical disabilities. In these and many other grants, NECC's success in "fishing for funds" was converted into far-reaching benefits.

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As the college adjusted and expanded its mission in these and other areas, a constant economic problem was the apparently simple question of how to employ enough workers to accomplish the ever-burgeoning functions. Throughout most of the seventies, NECC was limited to 232 state-funded full-time positions, as approved by the legislature. Many years in that decade, a "hiring freeze" was in effect. If personnel left, their tasks had to be assumed by those remaining. The author, for example, served for more than a year concurrently as Assistant Dean of the College and acting Chairperson of the Division of Instructional Development, a role which involved both supervision of the college library and media services, as well as ESL, the Discovery Program, and academic support services. Human resources were seriously overtaxed. Chairpersons of academic divisions for many years were required to work during the summer, but compensation for their vital contributions was always difficult in the extreme to arrange. They were still classified as "faculty members" and it took long years before it was realized that "per diem" arrangements were anachronistic and totally inadequate if they were to meet their heavy responsibilities.

In this sense, the search for additional funding sources became critical. In 1985, the personnel office could report on a college staff of more than 750 full-and part-time employees, many of whom were enabled to be on board only because of special grant funding. A Marxist analyst of the institution might well pronounce, "Economics, you see, *is* the bottom line!"

In 1980, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts was taking a long hard look at the state economy, and it began to intensify linkages between its public higher education system and local business and industry. In this it was well ahead of much of the rest of the nation. An April 2, 1986 article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* ("Community Colleges Are Changing

Their Roles to Meet Demands for New Types of Job Training”) reflected very recent efforts along these lines in states such as Ohio, Illinois, Tennessee, and North Carolina. But Governor Edward J. King had launched the Bay State on this course at the outset of the decade. In his “State of the State” message of early January, 1980, he called for a Bay State Project - “a program to train our citizens to take their places in rewarding and satisfying careers ... We must ensure that our public colleges and vocational schools train more engineers and scientists, more para-professionals and more technicians.”

A strong endorsement of this strategy appeared in the *Haverhill Gazette* on January 30, 1980. Its blunt title was “Funds needed for job training” and, having cited NECC’s commitment and track record, it called for action:

Now we find the school in the position of having to beg for funds to meet the demands and requests of both industry and the state government... There should be concerted effort to make Northern Essex a model for the rest of the state in meeting these desperate needs. We echo the pleas of President Dimitry and Governor King to upgrade this training program immediately.

Fortunately, action was both swift and decisive. Not only did the college’s regular budget improve, but the Governor’s message led to the formation of the Bay State Skills Corporation, a new vehicle for securing job-training funds. Northern Essex lost no time in submitting proposals, many of which were funded by this quasi-public corporation established in 1981 to award grants to educational institutions which link up with one or more private companies to train people for jobs in high-growth fields. In 1984 and 1985, for example, NECC received a total of nearly a quarter-million dollars in Bay State Skills grants and private sector matching funds for programs in Printed Circuit Technology, Industrial Wastewater Operation, and Paralegal Skills Training.

In June, 1980, the state legislature passed its long-awaited reorganization of public higher education, and when the Governor began to announce the first appointees to the new Board of Regents, many of them turned out either to belong to or at least to carry out the philosophy of the High Technology Council, a leading force for the modernization and expansion of Massachusetts industry through the development of a skilled labor force. The Regents, beginning in 1981, would come to earmark very significant funding for those colleges prepared to respond to the new challenges. Its sponsorship of “Collaborative Projects,” for example, encouraged a wide variety of innovative proposals. During 1984, the Regents awarded NECC \$137,862 in this category. There were many other grant proposals constantly being submitted and the results were extraordinary, as can be seen from the automated annual Grants and Donations Log which Wendy Shaffer created in 1983. The total amounts of such *ad hoc* funding for the three calendar years were: 1983 - \$1,002,088.00, 1984 - \$1,315,614.00; 1985 - \$1,851,225.00

Over and above the Bay State Skills Corporation grants and those of the Board of Regents, there were many others, from both public and

private sources, the largest of which were the state departments of Public Welfare, Education, and the U.S. Department of Education (in particular for its Job Training Partnership Act JTPA grants), and, most significant of all, the same agency's awarding of Title III grants to Northern Essex beginning in 1981. Under the Higher Education Act of 1976, as amended, the college qualified as a developing institution eligible for federal assistance in strengthening its development. By the end of 1985, nearly two million dollars had come to NECC through this vehicle and, as Mary Wilson (who had been the key person responsible for obtaining the Title III monies) reported to the NECC Board of Trustees in November of 1985, its impact was tremendous. The federal government, which had earlier paid much of the cost of constructing the campus, was now making possible a whole new range of programs and services. The establishment of a resource center for women, an extensive staff development program, the growth of the Occupational Skills Center and its many faceted curricula, the incorporation of computer services both in institutional management and in academic programs, the increase of accessibility for disabled students, curriculum development in nursing and alcohol and drug abuse, and many other direct and indirect benefits were realized because of Title III. Along with grants, donations from many individuals and companies also came to be a significant part of the institutional economy. From January 1983 to August of 1985, the college received twenty-nine gifts of equipment and other educational resources valued at approximately \$80,000. The psychological value was perhaps as important as the monetary value of these gifts, which said that local firms and agencies wanted to help the college to carry out its ever-changing mission.

Amidst these very positive economic factors of the early eighties, there were other constants which operated negatively. Sometimes at Northern Essex the rewards framework was insufficient and valuable personnel felt that they had to leave the college to accept positions elsewhere in order to receive compensation commensurate with their expertise and contributions. Many of those who were determined to remain in higher education were frustrated by working in a system where institutional loyalty meant very limited chances for growth in responsibility and income. Particularly in administrative positions, career progress often meant going elsewhere, because quantum salary advancement was not possible within the institutional framework, but if one were willing to go elsewhere, even *in the same system*, it was possible.

The financial condition of the college was also a consideration of the regional accrediting agency, the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC). When the college's second evaluation by that agency occurred in October, 1980, the six-member visiting team gave Northern Essex very high marks in most areas, calling it "an excellent college with excellent personnel." But it hastened to add that there were "lots of problems not of their own making. Most of these problems result from *lack of fiscal support by the Commonwealth*." (emphasis added)

The long and penetrating report of the NEASC called upon the emergent Board of Regents to eliminate unnecessary problems at NECC in general by providing more fiscal support and in particular by making the budget adequate for the high-cost occupational career programs which the



college had undertaken:

Let it be observed here that if the Board of Regents wishes Northern Essex Community College to continue to provide quality occupational career education ... then occupational career programs must be funded on a different basis...

In its list of thirteen “concerns” about the 1980 condition of NECC, the visiting team included nine items of a financial nature, nine specific ways in which economic factors were impeding the work of the institution and, in its summary recommendations, it stated: “The college should encourage the Board of Regents to enter into programmatic funding and to take cognizance of unique campus situations.”

As earlier sections of this chapter have indicated, NECC did go on to “encourage” the Regents as suggested and, on its part, the Board of Regents did respond and “take cognizance” of NECC’s unique campus situation by steadily and significantly increasing the funds available to the college during the entire period 1981-1985. Thus, when the system’s first Chancellor, John B. Duff, reviewed the progress of public higher education in the Commonwealth during those years in a “farewell address” of January 14, 1986, he began by describing the economic context of 1981 in these words:

The financial situation was bleak: Massachusetts ranked forty-ninth in state support for higher education; financial aid levels had not increased in years, and inflation continued to erode faculty salaries.

By contrast, the departing Chancellor could paint the picture of early 1986 as follows:

Since the inception of the Board, state appropriations ... have increased by 70 percent, from \$376.6 million to \$625 million. Academic salaries have been raised to nationally competitive levels. Scholarship aid ... which stood at \$16 million in FY 1981, increased to \$57.5 million in FY 1986 ...

Northern Essex had received its fair share of these dramatic increases and was, finally, on a sound financial footing. The prospects for the future appeared even more positive; two days after Dr. Duff’s survey, Governor Michael S. Dukakis announced that his budget for FY 1987 would include increases of over \$200 million for higher education. Challenge once again was becoming opportunity both for Massachusetts and for Northern Essex.

A second part of the changing environment at NECC from 1975 to 1985 was the unionization of most of the college’s full-time employees, a change which had at least as much impact as the purely economic forces. Unionization caused permanent and radical alteration of personal relationships; it affected management, staff, and students in direct and powerful ways. For better or for worse, the campus was unionized in 1976 and most

likely will remain so in the future. What did that great step imply?

To approach this question from the vantage point of the mid-eighties, one might have noticed that union activities, concerns, and issues were a fact of daily life on the campus. Unionization is pervasive. Almost every issue of *The Observer* provided coverage of it. Many meetings were held around it. Grievances were filed and sometimes beyond campus - to the statewide governing board or even beyond the Board to external arbitration or to the State Labor Relations Commission. Dean of Academic Affairs, Bob McDonald, sometimes had to spend two or more days a week away from NECC, because he served on the Regents' negotiating team for a new collective bargaining agreement. At the negotiating sessions, faculty member Dr. John Osborne was also present. Both administration and teaching have to be temporarily put aside because of the overriding importance of "the contract."

Historically, the question must be asked: how and why did the NECC family see its early harmony come to be replaced by its latter-day discord? Unionization at Northern Essex was *not* the result of internal discontent. By the early seventies, the college, particularly because of the effectiveness of its Academic Council, was an institution where partnership and participation prevailed. Some segments, to be sure, did not share in these feelings. The classified staff, both custodial and clerical, felt economically exploited and it was also excluded from institutional governance roles. The non-teaching professional staff felt vulnerable, underpaid, and without meaningful ladders of career advancement. During the period 1973-76, several developments occurred outside of the college which were to increase general malaise and make unionization inevitable. Both the legal framework and the economic context altered.

In 1973, the Commonwealth passed and adopted legislation enabling its civil servants to engage in collective bargaining for wages. The Public Employee Collective Bargaining Act went into effect on July 1, 1974 and granted to employees in public higher education:

"... the right of self-organization and the right to form, join, or assist any employee organization for the purpose of bargaining collectively through representatives of their own choosing on questions of wages, hours, and other terms and conditions of employment, and to engage in lawful, concerted activities for the purpose of collective bargaining or other mutual aid or protection, free from interference, restraint, or coercion."

This statute clearly accorded the right to negotiate far more than simply wages by referring to "other terms and conditions of employment." Yet the dominant concern of that era was, in fact, the salary question, because the state had imposed a "salary freeze" in 1973; the freeze was deep enough to last for three years and painful enough to virtually force college employees into taking advantage of their new option of collective bargaining.

The outcome became apparent at NECC as early as 1974, when the professional staff began to express its exasperation over the freeze. The NECC Academic Council felt compelled to make a public protest condemning the Governor and the state legislature for their "breach of im-

plied contract,” On November 26, 1974, the Academic Council Chairperson, Mary Harada, issued an irate press release. It was a well-reasoned and unanimously voted resolution which explained very clearly how the staff of Northern Essex felt. It failed to have the desired effect, but it convinced many that an “implied contract” was a chimera; only a real contract, written and legally binding, would suffice to thaw the salary freeze.

Thus, while the Academic Council was expressing its condemnation of the *status quo*, the NECC Faculty Association began to look into long-term strategies. It created an *ad hoc* Committee of Inquiry into Collective Bargaining, headed by Chet Hawrylciv. In September of 1975, after a year of discussion and research, this committee reported its findings and recommended that all members of the Association should support unionization. In December of that year, a vote was taken on all community college campuses and the Massachusetts Teachers Association was chosen (over AAUP and AFT) to be the exclusive bargaining agent. In that election, it was decided that department chairpersons would be eligible for unit membership, while division chairpersons would not. Even before a contract was negotiated, relationships were being changed. The most significant result, however, was that from then on working conditions would be decided for all of the colleges together; system wide uniformity and centralization were to increase; local discretion and autonomy were to decrease. Much of the previously strong faculty role in setting institutional policies and procedures at Northern Essex was now passe. There could be no more Faculty Status Committee, or Academic Calendar Committee, or Professional Development Committee, or Sabbatical Leave Committee within the Academic Council, since all of these bodies dealt somehow with working conditions and were now subject to system wide negotiation. The entire approach was radically and permanently altered. The heyday of the Academic Council was followed by the era of “contract implementation” and by a revival of the importance of the Faculty Association, which was now an affiliate of the National Education Association (NEA), Massachusetts Community College Council (MCCC) and Massachusetts Teachers Association (MTA). Moreover, the Faculty Association itself was changed and broadened to include personnel other than teaching faculty: counselors, librarians and other twelve-month professionals below the top management levels were now included in the new unit. The office of President of the Faculty Association (held successively between 1974-1985 by Richard Mesle, Chet Hawrylciv, Jack Aronson, Eleanor Hope-McCarthy, John Guarino, Peter McCarthy, Mary Prunty, John Guarino, James Bradley, John Guarino, and Joseph Rizzo) came to have an importance comparable to that of the President of the College; the role of the Chairperson of the Academic Council, so major from 1969 through 1975, was correspondingly diminished, even though the latter organization remained an important instrument through its committees on Curriculum, Budget, and Student Academic Affairs.

The Academic Council’s 1974 protest is particularly interesting in that it focused on the elimination of “merit increments.” The concept of professional “merit” and its relationship to an individual’s salary treatment was to experience an evolution of its own, often a highly controversial evolution. Whereas the professional employees were strongly for “merit

increments” in 1974, the same label (although with a far different meaning) met their intense opposition during negotiations for the fourth contract in 1983-84. And at one juncture, the interaction between the system wide union and the governing board became utterly hostile and acrimonious over the question of “merit.”

In December, 1979, the President of the MCCC, Carolyn Tetrault, released a memorandum on the subject of “Merit Increases for College Presidents.” It was intended to embarrass the MBRCC by being addressed not only to the Trustees of the MBRCC, but also simultaneously to legislators (the House Ways and Means Committee, the Senate Ways and Means Committee, the House-Senate Joint Committee on Education) and to high state administration officials (the Chancellor of Higher Education and the Secretary of Education).

In this memorandum, the MCCC President castigated the governing board for having approved “a merit increase for college presidents without requiring any form of evaluation to demonstrate that ‘merit’ “ and asserted that the “money for this increase, furthermore, was to be taken from the ‘merit pool’ of money of non-unit members.” In the same month, there was another letter, even more widely and publicly circulated, in which Carolyn Tetrault took the MBRCC to task for alleged violations of “fiscal accountability” and for utilizing faculty positions to augment its administrative staff.

The MBRCC’s Interim President, John R. Buckley) was highly incensed over the content and the format of these two position papers and responded with a three-page letter of refutation on January 9, 1980, in which he charged the MCCC with publicizing information which, he said, “in a number of instances is false, and in other instances misleading.” The overall deplorable state of management-union relations at the beginning of 1980 was clearly reflected in a concluding paragraph of interim President Buckley’s letter:

Finally, until I and others on your December mailing list receive a letter correcting the inaccurate statements contained in your letters, it will be impossible for me or anyone within the Central Office to hold further meetings with you or representatives of the Massachusetts Community College Council. It is vitally important that an air of trust be recreated immediately between the Massachusetts Community College Council and the Community College administration so that we can look forward to an amicable round of collective bargaining.

The adversarial relationship so evident in these exchanges had built up steadily over the previous four years. Each side had become increasingly exasperated with the other. Getting used to collective bargaining was a long, slow and frequently bitter process - and unfortunately, the relationship on the individual campuses came to reflect what was transpiring at the system wide level. Almost until its dissolution in March 1981, the MBRCC was ill-equipped to meet the challenge of unionization. The years from 1976 through 1980 saw frequent changes of leadership in the central office, which was trying, without experience or adequate staffing, to enforce

uniform contract implementation. The MBRCC, for example, had no legal staff of its own until 1978 and had to “farm out” its contract disputes with the MCCC to private law firms. On its part, the MCCC was also a novice; most of the collective bargaining experience of its parent organization, the MTA, was in the field of elementary and high school education; it did, however, have the advantage of its own legal consultants. In any case, the first five years of the new relationship between the MBRCC and its professional employees were very much a time of trial-and-error learning, of impatience and suspicion between the principals. The strain between the MBRCC and the MCCC, compounded by the endemic fiscal problems of that period, inevitably filtered down to the individual campuses and produced strained relations there as well. Northern Essex was not exempt from this fallout.

At Northern Essex, in fact, both sides took a realistic approach to collective bargaining. The administration accepted it as a fact of life and the Faculty Association was generally willing to ascribe most problems to state government or the MBRCC rather than to local causes or agents. During the eighties, however, there was a marked increase of recurrent local antagonisms and more of a tendency to attribute problems of living under the contract to institutional policies and/or personalities. The new Board of Regents, with its responsibility over all of public higher education, seemed to be not only more efficient but also more distant than the previous governing board, the MBRCC, had been. And the new local Board of Trustees, which had some interest in and responsibility over personnel matters, did not often become directly concerned with union-management issues, generally leaving them to be worked out by the administration with assistance from the staff of the Regents. In addition, the very continuity of leadership at Northern Essex worked in this direction. The President, the Deans, and the Director of Personnel were one team whose composition changed little over the years; the union leadership was another; even though the major offices of NECCFA were elected annually, they came virtually to be rotated among a small group of individuals. As these two teams interacted under successive contracts and in changing times, a certain mutual impatience, perhaps connected with their mutual familiarity, built up and interfered with the resolution of mutual differences. As interpreted by Personnel Director Stephen Fabbrucci, who came to Northern Essex in January of 1977, almost at the beginning of the era of unionization, the decade began with a very weak base for management-employee relations among the classified staff and a rather strong base for management-employee relations with the professional staff. A major, if not total, reversal of these bases occurred between 1976 and 1985.

The professional union at Northern Essex was not only one of the largest, but also one of the strongest, most “militant” chapters in the system. Even before unionization, NECCFA had been very proactive. The same tendency was present in administration, which worked to make Northern Essex not only the largest, but also the “best” community college in the state. NECC frequently dared to innovate. When it broke new ground with programs such as LEEP or Licensed Practical Nursing, it often had to venture into uncharted waters, into practical decisions not covered by existing collective bargaining agreements. Hence Northern Es-

sex often found itself a center of controversy over how to pursue its complex mission while staying within both the letter and the spirit of the law and the collective bargaining agreements.

One recognition of the system wide importance of Northern Essex has been the selection of its personnel, both management and union, for the negotiating of successive contracts. The first collective bargaining agreement was arrived at during the summer of 1976 and remained in effect for less than a year, expiring on June 30, 1977. No representatives from Northern Essex were present on either side of the table. The contract, originally intended to cover a three-year term, was a hastily drafted document, taken largely from earlier agreements then in effect in other segments of public higher education. Its many ambiguities left both parties glad of the opportunity to begin anew.

When the negotiating teams for the second contract were chosen, they included President Dimitry and Nursing Department faculty member Mary Prunty. The resultant contract covered the interval from July 1, 1977, through June 30, 1980. For the third contract negotiations, Dean of Administration John Palmucci was a member of the MBRCC team and Professor James Bradley was one of the MCCC representatives. The fourth negotiating sessions saw Dean Robert McDonald and Professor Jack Aronson on the respective teams. All of the contracts except for the first one were written for three-year periods. In 1985, a new contract for the years 1986-1989 was being negotiated, and once again Northern Essex was represented on both sides in the persons of Dean McDonald and Professor John Osborne. No other community college had been given such a consistently important role.

A good example of the awkwardness of the new context came in the spring of 1977, when the bargaining agreement specified that each campus would conduct student evaluations in all courses given that semester. It took a cover memo and two full pages of instructions from Boston to explain how this should occur. Northern Essex had, several years earlier, already begun to hold student evaluations and had a process that was familiar and comfortable. Now, in a climate of suspicion of everyone's motives and integrity, came a process involving student monitors, faculty monitors, signatures, counter-signatures, Student Advisory Commissioners, "raw data access logs" and other directives almost *ad infinitum* or, as some said, *ad nauseam*. The very purpose of the student evaluations changed from being primarily a means of feedback from students to their instructors to being primarily a component of one's professional evaluation by administrative overseers. The sheer logistics of implementing such a system was a great challenge and a source of many irritations. When this was multiplied by all of the other paperwork required each semester to document course materials, classroom observations, college and community service, student advisement, and professional development, many came to wonder if the cure were not perhaps worse than the disease. The total demands certainly appeared to burden people with so much paperwork that they might lose sight of their essential role of providing instruction or other educational assistance to students.

Like all things, collective bargaining had its price and its prizes. Over the ten-year period since 1976, the major gains for union members were

economic, and they were very substantial gains. A review of the salary schedules negotiated under the successive contracts reflects the scope of salary improvement:

<u>Contract</u> <u>Years</u>	<u>Salary Range:</u> <u>Faculty</u>	<u>Salary Range:</u> <u>Professional Staff</u>
1976-1977	9,866 to 26,261	11,759 to 21,158
1977-1980	12,000 to 26,750	13,100 to 24,800
1980-1983	14,903 to 32,849	16,388 to 31,285
1983-1986	18,655 to 41,119	21,557 to 41,152

As this summary indicates, salaries at the entry levels nearly doubled over the ten-year period while those at the top levels, usually associated with very long service and senior ranks, increased for faculty by roughly fifty percent and almost doubled for professional staff. There was a long-term trend to narrowing the gap between instructors and professors on the one hand and also between teaching staff and non-teaching professional staff on the other hand.

In addition to these negotiated salary schedules, most of which were implemented retroactively and in a series of adjustments, collective bargaining also brought financial benefit to some individuals through additional equity adjustments of "Distinguished Service Awards." In a general way, there was real progress toward moving community college salaries closer to those offered by the other segments of public higher education and particularly important progress in improving compensation for the non-teaching staff, who, before collective bargaining, had been without any systematic opportunities for promotion.

The negative side of the salary picture was that each of the contracts had to be approved and funded by the state government. Thus after long, usually difficult negotiating of a "financial package," the principals could deliver only an agreement that required approval and action by the state government. The closing article of each successive contract clearly specified that any obligations assumed by the governing board could be discharged only after the necessary appropriation was made by the General Court. Such action almost always was like pulling teeth. It took months for the machinery of government to fulfill such obligations. In the case of the 1983-86 contract, for example, agreement was finally reached in December of 1984, but it was not until mid-June of 1985 that the unit members were actually paid the several salary adjustments which were retroactive to July 1 of 1983. The fact that the Commonwealth did not pay any interest on the amount due appeared to be a reward for foot-dragging by bureaucracy. It was a bitter aftertaste to a long and convoluted process of arriving at a settlement.

At several junctures, in fact, the professional staff came very close to conducting strikes because of collective bargaining impasses and delays. Individuals had to lobby their legislators, write to the Governor, put bumper stickers ("Community Colleges Deserve a Fair Contract") on their vehicles, rally student and resident support, stage protests and demonstrations, wear lapel buttons (e.g., "PDQ"-short for Pretty Damn Quick), and practically

stand on their heads in order to force the employer to reach and live up to the terms of a contract. Even though each of the contracts included a "No Strike or Lock-Out Pledge," and the laws of the Commonwealth clearly prohibited any strike by public employees, there were numerous occasions when that course of action appeared probable or imminent: the autumn of 1976, the spring and fall of 1977, the fall of 1978, the spring and fall of 1984 and the spring of 1985 were all tense seasons when work stoppages were contemplated as a system wide strategy. Although often pushed to the very brink of desperation and illegal action, the statewide professional union was never quite forced to implement its threats; eleventh-hour measures always managed to be taken - but usually only after serious damage to management-employee relations on the several campuses, including Northern Essex. Only once, in May of 1977, was a work stoppage actually employed by NECCFA. For a few days, semester grades were withheld by the faculty; when this protest proved effective in bringing about contract funding by state government, the job action was called off; the grades were reported and the administration took no punitive measures.

One very significant reflector of the way in which the collective bargaining agreement process itself changed over time is seen in the various preambles of the successive contracts. There was an evolution from idealism and assumed commonality of purpose to pragmatism and recognition of basic differences between management and employees.

The Preamble to the first (1976) contract stressed mutuality of fundamental purpose:

The Board and the Association recognize and declare that providing quality higher education for the youth and adults of this Commonwealth, and quality educational services to citizens of the Commonwealth is their mutual goal *and* that the character of such education depends to a large extent upon the quality *and morale of its professional staff*. (emphasis added)

By the time of the second contract (1977-1980), this Preamble was shortened by deleting the section in italics above. This contract, in fact, anticipated a divergence of viewpoint and so it created a new medium for discussion and conflict resolution, a Management-Association Committee on Employee Relations (both at the system level and the campus level), which came to be known by its acronym MACER, and which has been continued in all succeeding contracts.

At the local level, MACER is the monthly meeting of management and union leadership "to discuss matters of mutual concern to the employee and employer." This broad definition allows either side to place virtually any item on the agenda for discussion. The aim is to agree on the implementation of the contract on a given campus, to discuss potentially controversial issues, to reach working compromises and thus to avoid formal confrontations. MACER was designed to be even-handed; three representatives of the administration would meet, at least once a month, with three members of the union. The calling of these meetings would alternate from one side to the other every month.

Thus, ever since the autumn of 1978, when the second contract went



into effect, there have been MACER meetings at Northern Essex almost every month during each academic year. The union officers have sat down with top-level managers (usually the President and the Deans of Administration and Academic Affairs) and addressed common concerns. Frequently these sessions began in late afternoon and went on, in marathon fashion, until 8 or 9 p.m. The fact that no minutes were kept enhanced the informality of the meetings. Nonetheless the frankness of exchanges occurred and many issues were resolved in the mutual give and take. Even some humor was allowed, as on the occasion when one side presented the other side with a symbolic can of the chemical "mace" to perhaps suggest its overreaction to general conditions or a particular bone of contention. At least neither side ever brought a fearsome medieval mace to the table; the "high-tech" spirit seemed apropos.

The Preamble to the third contract (1980-1983) also changed the focus of the assumed mutuality of goals in the following terms:

The Board and the Association recognize and declare that providing quality higher education programs and services for the citizenry of the Commonwealth *at low cost and with broad accessibility* (emphasis added) is their mutual goal.

The Preambles may thus have kept pace with the changing mission of the community colleges in Massachusetts, but usually it was difficult for the two sides to agree on the various articles below the preamble. The third contract, for example, expired on June 30, 1983 and negotiations for a successor contract began long before the expiration date. Yet as late as August, 1984, no agreement had been reached. The matter was finally turned over in that month to an impartial factfinder, James J. Healey. His findings, released in October, 1984, did lead to a settlement within two months. But it required a masterful report of forty-nine pages for him to even briefly summarize the many complex issues and disagreements which had brought the Board of Regents and the MCCC to a virtual impasse. There is perhaps no finer documentary evidence of the extent to which "mutual goals" had turned into mutual intransigence.

In this atmosphere of chronic delay, it sometimes seemed as if unionization was not worth its price. Old contracts, with at least partially objectionable requirements, were "held over" in force while no progress was being reached at the bargaining table and while salary adjustments retreated into an ever more distant retroactive past. The "morale" cited as a mutual goal in the first agreement had disappeared from the text, and, at least partially, from consciousness as well.

This change, however, was compensated for by other factors, major gains which unionization had entailed. By 1984, the old ghost of the promotion "quota system" had been laid to rest; there was a very generous availability of opportunities for advancement in academic rank or professional level. There was also the benefit of tuition waivers for spouses and children of employees to study in any of the Commonwealth's public universities, four-year colleges or community colleges. Money for professional development and educational needs was also made available and was awarded with peer input. Finally, in the 1983-1986 contract, provision was

made for the creation of a Health and Welfare Trust Fund which, effective in May, 1986, was to provide long-sought benefits of dental and vision care at no cost to the employees.

For some, both in management and in the union, all of these benefits of unionization had been obtained at the high price of "professional dignity." For many others, unionization represented a secure and orderly approach to the conduct of employee relations in a college which had grown into a public corporation and which had outgrown its childhood of paternalistic idealism. For still others, it was a bit of both these judgments.

A third major aspect of the changing environment at Northern Essex between 1976-1986 was in the realm of institutional governance. To some extent, this change was due to unionization. The Charter of the Academ-

**M**ASSACHUSETTS **C**OMMUNITY **C**OLLEGE **C**OUNCIL  
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**CONTRACT  
UPDATE**

On March 6, 1985, our contract funding bill was reported out of House Ways and Means and sent to the House. On Monday, March 11, 1985, it was put on the House calendar and scheduled for debate. It was hoped that there would be unanimous consent to have it go through the House in one day. However, Royall H. Switzler, (R. Wellesley), objected to having the rules suspended, thereby making it impossible for the bill to go through in one day and forcing the bill to the Committee on Third Reading. (The job of the Committee on Third Reading is to make sure that the bill is technically correct). The bill was brought up for debate, acted on favorably and sent to the Committee for the Third Reading. It is hoped that our bill will be reported out of the House on March 13, 1985. If it is reported out favorably, it is then passed to be engrossed (tentatively enacted), sent to the Clerk's office, and sent to the Senate where the process will be repeated.

**HEALTH AND  
WELFARE  
TRUST FUND**

The agreement to establish the Health and Welfare Trust Fund for higher education, officially known as "Board of Regents of Higher Education — Massachusetts Teachers Association Health and Welfare Fund, was signed by the Board of Regents on March 9, 1985. The final step to put this agreement legally into effect will be the signing of the document by all the Trustees. The participants in this Fund are the Massachusetts Teachers Association and its affiliated Associations: MCCC; State Colleges, (MSCA); Massachusetts Society of Professors/Faculty Staff Union (MSP/FSU); Association of Professional Administrators (APA); and the University Staff Association (USA).

The Trust Fund shall be administered and operated by the Board of Trustees. The Trustees shall consist of five Association Trustees, one representing each segment of higher education, and five Employer Trustees. Raymond Lemieux, MCCC Treasurer from Springfield Technical Community College, is our trustee. To date, the Board of Regents have not appointed their trustees.

After the agreement becomes effective, the Trustees must determine in which bank the monies will be deposited. The Trustees will then need to hire a plan

ic Council, for example, was revised in 1978 to bring that organization into conformity with the collective bargaining agreement. In the Academic Council, NECC had achieved a model of wide participation in the making of institutional policies and procedures. It was able to update the role of the Academic Council, which still is the envy of the professional staff on many other community college campuses in Massachusetts. A good indication of NECC's success in adapting its own governance tradition to the milieu of unionization was the 1980 comment of a visiting accredita-

tion team: "There is a serious effort on the part of the administration to include the faculty in democratic decision-making." Under the leadership of its early Chairpersons Patricia Parker, Gerard Morin, Joseph Rizzo, and Bonnie Flythe, the Academic Council made a smooth transition to the new environment. Its role, although reduced, remained important.

A much more radical change occurred with respect to the overall governance structure in 1980, when "reorganization" took place for all of public higher education in the Commonwealth.

Throughout the sixties and seventies, there had been recurrent proposals and studies to change the basic structure of the state's higher education system. One got the sense that it was a topic for perennial discussion and ever-postponed action. Then, all at once, on June 30, 1980, "Reorg" took place in a swift and massive way. Without discussion or debate, the General Court, then deliberating on the FY1981 state budget, passed an "outside section" (effective the very next day!) which brought to an end the long-standing multiplicity of governing boards and created, in their place, one new consolidated agent, the Board of Regents of Higher Education, to be responsible for all public colleges and universities in the Commonwealth.

As a result of this legislation, NECC would continue to be governed by the MBRCC, and continue to be advised by its Regional Advisory Board until March 1, 1981. On that date, it would begin to operate on a totally new basis, governed jointly by the statewide Board of Regents and by its own local Board of Trustees, which was also stipulated in the legislation. The new law clearly delineated the jurisdictions of the Regents and of the local Board of Trustees by limiting the latter to *internal* institutional matters. The law struck a judicious balance between centralization and local prerogative. It created a workable, common-sense kind of educational federalism in Massachusetts.

In effect, NECC went for nine months under a lame-duck arrangement, knowing that its traditional governing board and its traditional local "sounding board" were both slated to go out of existence. All in all, this major transition was accomplished with surprising ease. The Board of Regents was quickly formed in the summer of 1980 and began to prepare for its formal work to begin the following spring. Some of the ways in which the Board of Regents changed the nature of Northern Essex have already been suggested. It helped especially to improve the economic base of the college and to foster both the systematic evaluation of academic offerings and the development of new, community-responsive academic programs. It brought a new sense of equity, order, and long-range planning to the entire public sector.

For this institutional history, however, the key aspect of the reorganization of 1980, was the creation of the Northern Essex Community College Board of Trustees, with powers that would be far more than merely advisory. It introduced a new level of governance. Whereas before 1980, institutional decisions could be made by the president and then approved by just one "higher power," the MBRCC, the new law required all important business to be approved first by the Board of Trustees. Among the many matters statutorily assigned to the oversight of the Board of Trustees were:

1. Preparation of an institutional five-year master plan.
2. Appointment of the college president.
3. Administrative management of facilities and personnel.
4. Annual budget requests and allocations.
5. Institutional fees.
6. Acceptance of gifts and grants.
7. Student services and policies.
8. Transfer of funds among subsidiary accounts.
9. Capital outlay budget requests.
10. Affirmative action policies and programs.
11. Admissions standards and instructional programs.
12. Awarding of certificates and degrees.
13. Allocations of funds from student activities fees.

After March 1, 1981, Northern Essex could proceed to act in all these crucial areas only with specific approval or delegation by its new Board of initially ten and later eleven members, nine of whom were to be appointed by the Governor, with two elected by NECC alumni.

The new appointed trustees of Northern Essex were sworn in by Governor King at a ceremony on February 28, 1981. Of the nine original trustees, five were carryovers from the earlier Regional Advisory Board, and thus were already well informed about the college. The Chairman of the Advisory Board, Marjorie E. Goudreault, was elected as the Chairman of the Board of Trustees on May 6, 1981 and was reelected to that position for two additional terms. Continuity of leadership, often noted as a strength within the institution, was also to become a distinguishing feature of the Board of Trustees, two of whose members at the time (Marjorie Goudreault and John Lyons) served from the beginning. John Lyons, a leader and graduate of the NECC class of 1964, was elected as a trustee by the Alumni Association. As the list also reflects, the trustees were residents of cities and towns from the entire college service area, from Newburyport to Lowell. Several of them (Trustees Bernard Flynn, Brian Hardy, John Lyons, and Lois Richardson) were NECC alumni and, thanks to special legislation of 1981 which called for the inclusion of student representation, five of them (Achilleus Tsantarliotis, Michelle Gomes, Brenda Tyson, Marie Sirois, and Karin Frank) were simultaneously students and members of the Board. By the provisions of Chapter 402 of the Legislative Acts of 1982, the membership of the Board was increased to ten gubernatorial appointees, thus bringing the total to eleven, an odd number which could preclude possible deadlocks over a tie vote on a given issue.

The NECC Trustees took over their responsibility for the college on March 1, 1981 and held their first formal meeting on March 9, 1981. Unlike its predecessor, the RAB, which had met quarterly from the start of 1961, the Trustees hold monthly meetings, except in July and August. Their sessions are held on the campus on weekday evenings and are always open to the public. Unlike the Board of Regents, which frequently went into closed "Executive Session," the Board of Trustees conducted its discussions and votes almost totally in open session. The proceedings of all of its meet-

ings are preserved in the library and provide an excellent mirror of major college concerns. From their perusal, the following generalizations emerge:

1. Attendance by the Trustees was exceptionally faithful; absences were a rarity.
2. They lost no time in getting organized, adopting their Bylaws at their third meeting on April 6, 1981
3. They very quickly began to address the substantive issues of their responsibility, voting, for example, on May 6, 1981 to authorize NECC to join the Northeast Consortium of Colleges and Universities in Massachusetts and acting on June 3, 1981 on an agenda of thirty-two separate items.
4. They voted unanimously on the vast majority of motions, but occasionally votes were split as individual principles or conscience were recorded.
5. They never reached an impasse among themselves.
6. They never reached an impasse with the college administration or with the Board of Regents.
7. They brought new substance to the "one-college concept" by giving oversight to the Division of Continuing Education and Community Services as well as to the Day Division.
8. They consistently voted approval for the college to undertake new programs and activities as it expanded its comprehensive mission.

The total responsibility of the trustees for the welfare and operation of the college was, from the outset, enormous. To discharge that responsibility, they brought several important characteristics to the task. First of all, they were a lay governing board, rather than a group chosen for their educational expertise or experience. Collectively, in addition to the input of student and alumni perspectives, they drew on varied backgrounds: union leadership, city government, journalism, law, homemaking, engineering, higher education, business management, state legislature and lobbying, restaurant proprietorship, and manufacturing, among others. The underlying theory that an academic institution is best governed by an unpaid group of lay persons reflecting society as a whole was particularly appropriate to the community college.

Although the trustees were unpaid, they had real personal stakes in the well-being of the college. In a number of instances, their children or other family members were NECC students; all of them had friends and neighbors who depended on NECC; several of them had taught, either days or in DCE, for the college; all of them took a great interest and pride in the institution, attending many college functions in addition to the Board's own meetings.

The focal point of their work, however, remained the vast amount of institutional decision-making which they addressed in their regular meetings. Each month from March, 1981 on, the college staff would prepare "the packet" of materials requiring trustee action, often consisting of voluminous and literally heavy sets of working documents (e.g., the FY 1984

Budget Request of 158 pages), "the packet" was delivered to each trustee approximately one week before a given meeting. The "homework" may have been heavier than in some of the college's most demanding courses. The individual trustees would then study the materials and formulate questions which they felt should be answered before decisions were made. Individually or through committees, they frequently telephoned the campus or met with staff to resolve such questions. Then, in the context of the actual meeting, there was opportunity for further discussion before formal votes were taken.

This entire process gave NECC a kind of free yet searching review of its contemplated courses of action before any action was taken and also before it risked the submission of its plans to external authorities. The success of the process depended largely on the degree of thoroughness with which the trustees prepared themselves for their meetings and also on their ability to find consensus among themselves as to which courses of action deserved approval and implementation. They had to ask tough questions; they had to reinforce institutional momentum and morale.

The extent to which the Board met these challenges is evident, in part, from the record of its efficiency. Each monthly meeting was preceded by an informal supper together. Whatever "smalltalk" was current was exchanged there. Once Marjorie Goudreault called the formal meetings to order, usually at 6:00 p.m., a crisp, businesslike atmosphere prevailed, and most often the agenda was accomplished within two hours of discussion and voting. A representative sample of just how many varied and important matters came before the Board is seen in its agenda of April 6, 1983. On that occasion, the Board was called to order at 6:20 p.m. and completed its deliberations on twenty-two major items in time for adjournment at 7:50 p.m. For any who might tend to be cynical of the ability of committees or boards to resolve issues, this degree of productivity, achieved virtually every month, was cause for revision of that view.

The speed and smoothness with which the Board conducted its business was also made possible by the college administration which meticulously prepared the supportive materials for items under consideration. A classic example of this type is the President's Memorandum of September 30, 1983, addressed to the Board of Trustees and explaining in great detail the college's "Institutional Advisory and Management System." This memo and its accompanying attachments are dramatic testimony of just how large and complex the college had become and how "extensive" its internal governance network had grown. Perhaps because of the very existence and smooth functioning of this extensive network of input, advice and deliberation, the work of the NECC Board of Trustees was facilitated: it did not find itself in the position of some governing boards, forced to delay decisions pending "further study."

In its long-term effort to generate "Still More Light," Northern Essex was fortunate to have the steady support and conscientious supervision of its Board of Trustees. One symbol of the fine relationship which had been nurtured was expressed in December of 1985, in the form of a gift to the college by Trustee Henry A. Walker. His donation of one of his outstanding seascapes, "Breaking Surf: Emerson Rocks" - placed on display in the Bentley Library - evokes more than the majesty and energy of nature; it symbolizes that gift of self which has been made by the Board, both collectively and individually.

## New Challenges, Opportunities & Discoveries

In this history of the college, I have presented the basic metaphor of the college as a ball of string, a spool of many threads. Many strands of that string have been unwound and examined in close detail, so as to suggest an authentic feel of this unique and special college during its first quarter-century. The string was constantly tested as it lengthened. At times the testing was strenuous; instead of breaking, the string grew stronger.

This final chapter focuses on three of the more important threads of the Northern Essex story: changing demographic patterns, relationships with regional business and industry, and evolving collaborative networks with other educational institutions. Each of these by nature is as much a part of the college's future as it is of its past.

The demographic factor at Northern Essex changed radically during the seventies and eighties. The characteristics of the student body became increasingly "nontraditional," as an earlier chapter has shown. This was due in part to the specific outreach efforts of the college and in part to simultaneous changes in the makeup of the population of the Merrimack Valley. By 1985, Northern Essex was beginning to confront a serious shrinkage of the numbers of graduating high school students; projections were for this decline to continue well into the next decade. If enrollments were to continue to grow, effective recruitment of new types of students was becoming increasingly necessary.

A review of NECC Master Plans reveals that the college has been well aware of changing demography, both statewide and locally, for several years. The Master Plan for 1983-1988, for example, cited statistics from the Massachusetts Department of Education showing a twenty-one percent decline in state high school enrollments by 1987. The downward trend coincided with the college's planning of many new academic programs and also with its intensified efforts to secure the construction of a large

new High Technology Building on the Haverhill campus. Much attention was therefore focused on accurate and positive enrollment forecasting. In the preparation of 1986 data for the Board of Regents Enrollment Projection Project, eight factors were identified which would justify a projection of increased enrollments, even in the light of the decline of those in the traditional college-age population. These factors included the work of the Enrollment Management Advisory Committee; a student market study conducted by the Colorado-based consulting firm, The Ingersoll Group; the growth of the LEEP Program; enhancement of the Center for Business and Industry; revision of student advising systems; improved publicity; improved telecommunications; increased grants for new curriculum development and implementation. A further illustration of the crucial importance of the demographic factor is found in the April 12, 1986 report of the Cambridge, Massachusetts architectural planning firm, Sert, Jackson and Associates, entitled *Study for High Technology Building*. More than half of this document, seventeen pages of detailed data, addresses the issue of why Northern Essex needs new instructional facilities in an era when estimates of the decline in the traditional college-age population in Massachusetts over the next decade run as high as forty-two percent. The thrust of the evidence is that Northern Essex *will* be able to grow because of what the college has already done: it has maintained high enrollments by providing innovative programs and the effective delivery of developmental education for its growing clientele of older students and students of minority background. The case for the Commonwealth to provide additional facilities is clearly made to rest on a long and successful record of flexible adaptation to the socioeconomic needs and potential of the area.

At least as early as 1972, with the program called OOE (Occupational Opportunity Exploration Program), Northern Essex had focused on attracting new groups into its student population. By 1976, with the advent of the CETA era, the college was moving boldly to address regional vocational needs for new constituencies. A letter from Lawrence Mayor John J. Buckley of May 18, 1976, shows the wide range of this educational outreach as well as its favorable reception by the governmental agency which could, and did, make it happen. Between 1976 and 1986, thousands of area residents took advantage of innovative programs directed at occupational training, retraining, and in-service education. Thus, a changing demography was not allowed to become a limitation on the college; instead, it became a means to greater comprehensiveness.

Throughout its first twenty-five years, Northern Essex was closely connected with local business and industry. Previous chapters have suggested some of the highlights of that relationship. The college was created largely through the efforts of the Greater Haverhill Chamber of Commerce; local business and industrial leaders provided scholarships and equipment for it, and many of them served as members of its original Advisory Board or, later, of its Board of Trustees.

For its part, the college repaid this interest and support in a variety of ways. It opened its facilities for use by business and industry and became a much-used resource for social events which they sponsored, as well as for countless workshops, seminars, and short-term training programs. On April 30, 1986, for example, thirty-eight local firms and agencies came to



Northern Essex as part of a Job Fair to recruit workers for their organizations, thus underscoring the main way in which the college served them, by providing a skilled labor pool. From hospitals to insurers, from retail outlets to high tech producers, from clerical service providers to banks and design consultants, these employers - both large and small, public and private - were looking to their community college as a primary source of trained personnel. As the writing of this institutional history concludes, it would be difficult to locate a business or industry or governmental agency anywhere within the Merrimack Valley without staff members educated at the college. The relationship has been totally positive and mutually beneficial. It is more than symbolic that three of the major architects of the college have been affiliated with the Haverhill Chamber of Commerce: John Dimitry as its Chairman of the Board, Donald Ruhl as its President, and Doris Ritter as its Chief Administrative Assistant.



Although, from the very beginning, Northern Essex attracted the attention of local business and industry and focused its attention on their needs, the relationship was only embryonic until the early seventies. The college first needed to acquire adequate facilities and staff before it could deliver significant programs for these groups. In the 1970s and 1980s, with major work in Cooperative Education, the Northern Essex Community College Occupational Advisory Council (OAC), the Center for Business and Industry, the Manpower Training and Occupational Skills Centers, and the provision of custom-tailored, on-site educational programs, the college has increasingly redeemed the pledge of effective partnership with this constituency.

An early example of such intensified effort is found in a trade journal of early 1974, when the winter edition of *Our Sun* (the corporate magazine of Sun Oil Company) ran an article about Northern Essex. "Going

to College in a Service Station” explained how NECC’s Barbara Webber persuaded Charles MacBridge, the proprietor of a nearby Sunoco station, to donate the use of his station as a classroom for a course entitled “Fixing Your Car.” The course ran several times and was instructed by another local Sunoco dealer, George Kamberelis, assisted by his wife, Polly. The Sun Oil Company was duly proud of this venture, which was described, in part, as follows:

The class of twenty-five students is about evenly divided between men and women. The ages range from late teens to early Social Security. Some are full-time students at the college, others part-time. There’s a nurse, and a teacher and a newspaperman. Mr. and Mrs. Harold Nannis have turned it into a family project. The students come from all over Massachusetts’ Merrimack Valley and southern New Hampshire.

Despite programs such as “Fixing Your Car” or the Associate degree program in Banking, which dated back to 1971 and involved partnership with local banks and the American Institute of Banking, the major breakthroughs in serving the local economy were to come in an exciting cluster of developments of the later seventies: Cooperative Education (1977), the Northern Essex Occupational Advisory Council (1977), and the Center for Business and Industry (1979).

In April of 1977, two state agencies, the state Department of Education and the Massachusetts Board of Regional Community Colleges, agreed to work more closely to promote effective vocational education in the Commonwealth. By their *Joint Policy On Occupational Education* (April 15, 1977), they pledged to collaborate in this work and in seeking and administering federal and state vocational education funds at the postsecondary and secondary school levels. This landmark policy statement charted new directions for postsecondary occupational education including expanding access, improvement of guidance, provision of support services, use of community resources, collaboration with economic development programs, continuing education and community service, cooperation with Regional Vocational Technical High Schools, cooperative education, experiential credit, and in-service education. One representative excerpt from this extensive blueprint was about the “Use of Community Resources:”

The boards encourage occupational education programs to use community resources such as business, industry, unions, the public and private agencies.

They are especially supportive of cooperative education and the challenge examination system which recognize the value of learning derived from on-the-job work experience. Programs of occupational education jointly conducted with business, industry, unions, and agencies should be expanded and be an integral part of future program development.

Within two months of the promulgation of this policy, Northern Essex began to move in some of these new directions. In June of 1977, it created the Northern Essex Community College Occupational Advisory Council. With an original membership of eleven persons (expanded to 14 in 1978, and to 17 in 1979), this group quickly became an important unifying agent for the college's total mission in employment training. It did not replace the existing advisory boards of particular career programs, but it created a think-tank panel, which met quarterly to review and make suggestions regarding the total effort. The OAC membership lists for 1978 and for 1985 reveal strong continuity, with four of the original members, including Chairman John J. Linnehan, active on the Council for two decades. They also reflect both the high level of expertise and the truly regional and diverse backgrounds of the membership.

OAC meetings were usually weekday working luncheons held on campus or, occasionally, at topical sites such as the Greater Lawrence Technical School. In addition to the Council members, various college staff frequently joined the deliberations, depending on the particular agenda. Deans Landry, Peroni, and McDonald worked closely with the Council, as did Director of the Center for Business and Industry, Joseph Glasser; Assistant to the President, Mary Wilson; Director of Development, Wendy Shaffer; and former Director of Cooperative Education, Dr. Abbott Rice. Guest speakers and resource persons also frequently shared in the meetings. A representative sample of the depth and variety of issues considered is found in the minutes of the Council meeting of June 3, 1985. The Council organized itself into specific task forces and it also conducted detailed surveys of the labor market, of actual and projected employer needs, and of changing economic and demographic factors. It gave the college new links with private enterprise and also with public-sector agencies such as the Division of Employment Security and the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission. It made the public more aware of the public community college. One of its earliest promotional pieces was a brochure of 1978 written as a "Memorandum to Merrimack Valley industries and industries thinking of relocating here." This brochure, which listed the thirty-seven occupational programs then offered, concluded with this invitation:

Northern Essex Community College is sincerely interested in working with you to explore the business potential of the Merrimack Valley and the ways in which the college can continue to expand and enhance that potential. We cordially invite you to come to the college, talk to us and share your concerns and needs with us. We want to help.

"We want to help" - such was the spirit of the OAC. It did its work so quietly, and so often off-campus that many may be unaware of its crucial role in helping the college to thrive over its first nine years. Even long-term members of the NECC academic community might be surprised to learn that in the early eighties, it was the Council which:

1. Proposed the Quality Assurance Certificate Program (coordinated by Corinne Grise), which began in 1984.

2. Secured both cash and equipment gifts, such as the \$15,000 donation of the Hewlett- Packard Corporation in 1983.
3. Brought about (largely through the efforts of William Butler) the housing on campus of a satellite office of the Division of Employment Security.
4. Provided public relations for the college, both within their respective firms and in the community at large.
5. Approved all NECC proposals submitted to the Department of Education for Vocational Education funded programs. Chairman John Linnehan, responsible for this aspect, was most helpful in this area.
6. Enabled the college to house a satellite Small Business Development Center in collaboration with the Massachusetts Department of Commerce. This Center, made possible through the efforts of George Sheehan, allowed the college to provide advice and other forms of support to both large and small enterprises in the region.
7. Served as a liaison between the college staff and key individuals in the regional economy, putting NECC in direct contact with leaders such as Mrs. Florence Yen, Vice President for Human Resource Development at the Wang Corporation, and Eugene O'Neill, former Economic Development Coordinator of the City of Haverhill.

In these and in other important contributions, the Occupational Advisory Council became a strong catalyst helping Northern Essex to assist both employees and employers throughout its service area. The steady dedication of the unpaid volunteer members of the Council was one more reason Northern Essex was able to convert challenges into opportunities.

Another vehicle facilitating that same purpose was the Center for Business and Industry (CBI), created as a permanent part of the institution in 1979, when President Dimitry invited Joseph Glasser, former Vice-President of the Missile System Division of the Raytheon Company in West Andover, to establish a Center with the specific role of outreach to the business and industrial community. For the following six years, his extensive top-level contacts with local economic leaders paved the way for many collaborative ventures, building on a foundation laid by Director of the college Occupational Skills Center, Stephen Brown. Mr. Glasser worked on a part-time but ongoing basis to discover training needs and to encourage regional firms to find solutions to their needs at the college, through programs custom-tailored for them by the appropriate academic divisions, usually through the Divisions of Continuing Education and Community Services. Even more than with the OAC, the work of the Center was primarily achieved through personal contacts and quiet innovative brainstorming about new opportunities. The complexity of the fast-changing regional economy was such that by the autumn of 1985, it was decided to greatly expand the size and scope of CBI. A dynamic full-time director, Mel Silberberg, was appointed and was joined by other full-time professionals, Helene Plamondon as Curriculum Specialist and Sandra Roberts as Outreach Recruitment Counselor. The contribution of Joseph Glasser

was thus summarized in the college's 25th anniversary motto, "Just the Beginning." By early 1986, this new four-member team of CBI was ready to undertake even more intensive contacts with local business and industry. Its theme, "What Can We Do For You?" was a new statement of the by now traditional NECC characteristic of flexible responsiveness.

Much of the recent focus of NECCOAC, the Center for Business and Industry, and the Division of Continuing Education and Community Services could be classified as "reverse co-op," i.e., continuing education of persons currently employed, who devote some time from their work schedule to learn new skills or to upgrade their occupational qualifications



*President John Dimitry speaking at a commencement.*

by taking Northern Essex courses either at the college or at the job-site itself. Among the many employee groups initially served in this way were the following area companies and agencies: Western Electric Company, Varian/Exitron Corporation, Gould-Modicon Corporation, New England Telephone Company, Digital Corporation, Intertel Incorporated, Hewlett-Packard Corporation, Microfab Incorporated, General Motors Corporation, Haverhill School Department, Lawrence School Department, Salisbury School System, Pike School, Pollard Elementary School, American Institute of Banking, Headstart of Lawrence, Internal Revenue Service, Greater Lawrence Home Health Care, Dynamics Research, Pilgrim Nursing Home, Solomon Mental Health Center, American Cancer Society, Lee Institute of Real Estate, Massachusetts Department of Social Services, and the Massachusetts Department of Public Works. The number and variety of programs custom-tailored for these and similar groups was, in effect, NECC's delivery on a promise made in its first institutional brochure, a promise made in April of 1961:

This college seeks to become an educational and industrial development center for this region of the Commonwealth.

Several factors could be cited to explain the growing success of such “reverse co-op” offerings during these eight years. The most obvious factor, however, is the simultaneous development of the college’s Office of Cooperative Education and Placement, two late but very significant components of the evolving institution.



For most of its first ten years, Northern Essex handled its job-placement function on a primarily informal and individual basis; it lacked both staff and office space for this purpose. Employers usually contacted the faculty or college administrators directly as current needs for NECC graduates emerged. Part-time positions were often filled by posting notices on the campus or in *The Observer*, or simply by word-of-mouth among the students. Concern over systematic follow-up on graduates, whether for transfer or employment, increased during the college’s first self-study and accreditation process during academic year 1968-69.

The first formal placement service was created that year within the Counseling Department by Richard LeClair, whose previous experience at the University of New Hampshire was specifically in the area of career guidance and placement. For several years, Dick tried to interest students and other staff members in the effort, but the results were disappointing. NECC was still mainly a transfer college; employment opportunities were relatively few.

By the mid-seventies, conditions changed. Under newly available grant funding, Manny Thomas and Peter Kamberelis were employed as Director and Assistant Director of Placement. Together, they organized new services such as a permanent credential file; seminars on career information; workshops on job hunting, resume preparation, and employment interviews. Then the funding expired and the placement function lapsed for nearly two years until the hiring, in July, 1977, of Richard Pastor,

who developed a permanent and highly effective center, which combined close collaboration with the Division of Employment Security, an extensive Career Resource Library, microfiche and special job-search computer services, and frequent contact with other placement directors and employers. Located in the College Center, the Placement Office began to receive institutional support and increasing student utilization.

During this same period in 1977, Dr. Abbott E. Rice joined the NECC staff as the first Director of a new, but related effort, the Office of Cooperative Education. Defined at the outset as "the integration of classroom theory with practical experience," the co-op program offered many advantages to a constantly growing number of NECC students. Two credit-bearing courses, Cooperative Education I and Cooperative Education II, allowed students to earn up to six credits towards a degree in many of the colleges programs. Each course was based upon a Learning Contract developed between the student and the employer, work experience (either paid or volunteer), and satisfactory completion of a training agreement, as evaluated by the appropriate academic department and division. Interested students either matched their current job to their degree program or asked the Co-op Ed office to arrange a placement for them. The concept fit students working either full or part-time and caught on very quickly. Although the Director's position was dependent on federal funding from 1977 to 1981, Dr. Rice was able to demonstrate the growing relevance of the program, which became state-funded after 1984. Since the early eighties, approximately 100 students per semester have participated in co-op jobs and internships, which often helped them to find out if they really did wish to pursue a particular career and also to get one foot across the threshold of permanent employment. The natural connection between co-op and placement led to their merger in an Office of Cooperative Education and Placement in 1981. This combined office continued under the direction of Dr. Abbott Rice, while Dr. Pastor became Director of Financial Aid, another of the crucial units of student services. With an outstanding professional and support staff which included Tom Fallon, Bill Linnehan, Rose Paolino, Jackie Sweeny, Doug Wilkinson, Robert Schuiteman, and Debby Scire, the co-op and placement outreach extended to more than 180 different firms and organizations throughout northeastern Massachusetts and southern New Hampshire. It thus enabled the college to go beyond the simple preparation of students for future employment and to establish ever closer linkages with the regional economy.

The overall effectiveness of Northern Essex' relationships with area business, industry, and public-sector agencies has been recognized in a variety of ways. In July of 1984, for example, the Banking Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives, chaired by Representative William H. Gray, utilized the campus to conduct regional hearings on federal fiscal policy and proposed legislation. The committee took note of particular Northern Essex efforts to enhance the local economy: training partnerships with Western Electric, Analog Devices, Honeywell, Digital Equipment Corporation, and Gould/Modicon; in-plant programs in shorthand and writing, keyboard training, personal computers, electronics and printed-circuit technology; collaboration with the Massachusetts Department of Commerce to provide advice and assistance to area small businesses;

coordination with the Massachusetts Division of Employment Security in the areas of job-matching, manpower information, and publicity for training opportunities.

In November, 1985, the Massachusetts Department of Commerce sponsored an all-day conference at NECC on the theme "Massachusetts Business Incentives." Prospective investors and entrepreneurs were given a total view of advantages offered by the Commonwealth in five key areas: financing, tax incentives, training and recruiting, export assistance and foreign trade, and the Department of Commerce Program. This conference recognized NECC, not just as a convenient facility for its meeting, but as an exemplary agent of the state, particularly in the area of training and recruiting of a skilled labor force.

Finally, when Governor Michael S. Dukakis came to the college to deliver the Commencement Address at NECC's twenty-fourth graduation exercises on May 31, 1986, he also reflected on the impact of NECC on the regional and state economy. Having stated the theme that "The Spirit of Massachusetts is the Spirit of Innovation," Governor Dukakis cited several of the specific college activities which have been described here and told the 903 graduates:

As students at Northern Essex Community College, you must appreciate how central innovation is to everything around us. For this school is not only our state's largest community college, it is also our most innovative ... Northern Essex is a beacon of opportunity and a landmark to innovation.

These qualities which Governor Dukakis attributed to NECC have been evidenced many times in many different ways. Readers of the fall, 1985 DCE & CS brochure, for example, would know, from the cover alone, that NECC epitomized opportunity and innovation. It suggested comprehensiveness and promised "We'll Give You the Pieces To Win." Inside the cover, the catalog's Index included the following entries: Career Exploration for High School Students, Overseas Academic Semester, Salem State College, University of Lowell, and Wentworth Institute. What was a community college doing advertising other institutions?

The references were not some outlandish media trick. They were, rather, a reflection of NECC's maturity and readiness to work in cooperation with other schools in finding all of the "pieces" that an individual student might need "to win." They were a natural byproduct of a long-standing institutional policy of working with other educational institutions as partners, rather than as rivals.

The early chapters of this history recalled how dependent Northern Essex had been on other institutions, both public and private, secondary and postsecondary, in getting itself launched and underway. Encouragement, equipment loans and gifts, advice, support, and recognition had all been forthcoming in the first decade. NECC simply could not have emerged and prospered totally on its own. Once it had emerged, and particularly after it acquired its own permanent main campus, NECC moved to repay some of those early kindnesses, not just to other public colleges, but to secondary schools and private institutions as well. In effect, it recog-



nized that its own mission, however comprehensive it might become, was impossible to achieve in isolation.

Therefore, in many of the ways already described, NECC set out to discover ventures of possible collaboration with other schools. It found its first partner in the Greater Lawrence Technical School; the two insti-



*Massachusetts Governor Michael Dukakis, Audrey Dimitry, and NECC President John Dimitry.*

tutions pioneered in community college-vocational technical high school joint programming by initiating shared Associate degree programs in Dietary Technology (1974) and Food Service Management (1975). In 1981, the Technical School also became the Andover-Lawrence area extension center for NECC's Division of Continuing Education and Community Services. Newburyport, Chelmsford, and Dracut High Schools similarly made their facilities available as extension centers for DCE & CS.

In 1974, the Massachusetts system of public higher education implemented an agreement, known as the Commonwealth Transfer Compact, to facilitate the movement of students among its member institutions. A driving motive behind this agreement was to provide graduates of the expanding community colleges with a smooth transition (recognition of their credits earned) when they applied for transfer as juniors into the senior college or university. Although the Compact was helpful, it did not solve all transfer problems and, of course, it was not binding on private colleges. Northern Essex thus began to consider developing "2 + 2" agreements with other institutions on a bilateral and more specific basis. It looked first to its oldest friend and early neighbor, Bradford College, which, in its own evolution of the seventies, had become coed and also had received baccalaureate degree-granting authority. The relationships between Bradford and NECC had always been close and cordial. Dean Ruhl had helped advise Bradford in its changing years; Bradford had made housing available for President Dimitry and his family during their first year in the Haverhill

area; there was cross-registration and significant faculty interaction. Several members of the Bradford academic community (Dorothy Bell, Margaret Walsh, and Carolyn Morton) served on NECC's Regional Advisory Board or (later) Board of Trustees. Mutuality of interest and a common concern for student welfare led to a formal "capstone" agreement between the two colleges. It was signed by Presidents Dimitry and Armstrong on May 1, 1979, and encouraged many NECC graduates to continue on to the bachelor's degree at Bradford. Similar agreements were negotiated in subsequent years initially with the following institutions:

University of Lowell, (1980)  
Nasson College, (1981)  
Lesley College (for Early Childhood Education) (1982)  
Emmanuel College (for Nursing) (1983)  
Salem State College (1984)  
Wentworth Institute of Technology, (1984).

In the spring of 1986, NECC and five other state community colleges entered into a dual-admission program with the College of Engineering of UMass (Amherst), whereby students are jointly accepted by both institutions but proceed with their educational program for the first two years at the community college and the last two years at the University.

Agreements for ongoing transfer were also being explored for specific programs of study with Bentley College (for Business); Fitchburg State College (for Early Childhood Education and Human Services); Bridgewater State College (for Early Childhood Education); North Adams State College, Wheelock College, Westfield State College, and the University of Massachusetts at Amherst (all for Early Childhood Education); Salem State College (for Social Work).

As described earlier, in Chapter 12, NECC's cooperation with Gallaudet College of Washington, D.C. has been even closer. By becoming, in 1980, the home of Gallaudet's New England Extension Center, NECC has helped colleges throughout the six-state region to address the academic, social, cultural, and economic needs of the deaf and hard of hearing community.

Another vehicle for multilateral collaboration between institutions of higher education is the Northeast Consortium of Colleges and Universities in Massachusetts (NECCUM), which was organized in 1981 and which initially had the following members: Bradford College, Endicott College, Gordon College, Marian Court Junior College of Business, Merrimack College, Middlesex Community College, Monteserrat School of Visual Art, Northern Essex Community College, North Shore Community College, Salem State College, and the University of Lowell.

NECCUM was created on the initiative of the college presidents for the purpose of providing educational services more effectively and efficiently for the students, faculties, and communities of the Merrimack Valley and North Shore regions of the Commonwealth. During its first five years it promoted the following activities: cross registration among all member colleges, library exchanges, faculty exchanges, The Lawrence Ed-

ucation-Employment Project, library automation, collaboration with area schools, and faculty-and staff-development programs.

At its incorporation in the spring of 1981, NECCUM had offices at Salem State College. After receiving a special appropriation from the Commonwealth to establish an outreach project in Lawrence, NECCUM headquarters moved to that city in January, 1983, using office space at Central Catholic High School. Its "Lawrence Project" was a bold and ambitious effort to enhance educational opportunity for all Lawrence residents, and particularly for the Hispanic community. The project had a steering committee including the presidents and key staff members of the four closest member institutions (Bradford College, Merrimack College, Northern Essex, and the University of Lowell) as well as area legislators Senator Patricia McGovern and Representative Kevin Blanchette, and a seventeen-member citizens Advisory Board. Its first Director was Nunzio DiMarca, an NECC graduate and former member of the staff of DCE & CS.

It is significant to note that the Lawrence Project was begun more than a year and a half before the turmoil which erupted in Lawrence during the summer of 1984. The educational community was far ahead of other societal agencies in recognizing unmet human needs and in beginning to address them. Through counseling, testing assessment, and effective publicity in bilingual flyers and resource brochures, the Lawrence Project was a statement of serious ongoing commitment which held out new hope to the previously underserved linguistic minorities. It also paved the way for Northern Essex to undertake, in January of 1985, the ambitious and long-range Lawrence Education-Employment Project (LEEP), which saw Northern Essex set up a complex learning center in downtown Lawrence, a center which served more than 1,000 persons in its first year and a half and will certainly deserve a major place in the history of NECC's second quarter century. By its very nature, NECC was the best prepared of all of the NECCUM members to take up this exciting challenge and to convert it into new opportunity and discovery.

With these factors of a changing demography, evolving relationships with business and industry, and new forms of networking and collaboration with other schools and colleges, Northern Essex came to its silver anniversary year in 1986 and this account of its birth, growth, and development concludes - at least for now. The promises of 1960 and 1961 have been more than kept. The first twenty-five years were the hardest, the most rewarding, the best. And yet truly they were "Just the Beginning." As the NECC motto affirms, there is "Still More Light" to gather and to spread. Education is a forever kind of thing.

## A Brief Summary of Northern Essex Community College since 1985

by Mary Wilson, in collaboration with Wendy Shaffer

### Introduction

In his history of the college, Dr. John Spurk drew an analogy between the development of the college and a ball of twine rolling forward through its origins and early years under the leadership of President Harold Bentley. That ball has continued to roll on. As with its first president, the texture of the twine and the path the ball has taken, have been shaped in large part by the presidents who followed him: Dr. John R. Dimitry, Dr. David Hartleb, and Dr. Lane A. Glenn.

The potential for a president's personal vision to impact an institution within a larger educational, cultural, social, economic, and political context is undeniable. It has certainly been the case at Northern Essex throughout its history. Each of its four presidents has had a vision for the college suited to the times. Each man's leadership skills and style prepared him to face the challenges and welcome the opportunities that arose during his tenure.

As eloquently documented in the History of Northern Essex Community College 1960-1985, President Harold Bentley had the opportunity to virtually create the institution. He was "guided" only by the Massachusetts Board of Regional Community Colleges' (MBRCC's) remotely enforced policies for community colleges; a helpful but non-mandatory Local Advisory Council with no actual authority; and an internal association of faculty members again advisory only in nature. He essentially operated in an era when personal charisma was paramount. He knew everyone by their first names. He performed every conceivable task and function. He enjoyed tremendous autonomy and flexibility. He was truly the benevolent master who allowed the masses he ruled to do their own thing so long as it suited his important purposes. When it didn't, he cajoled, he manipulated, and if that didn't work, in the end, he simply laid down his law.

As president, Harold Bentley was operating pre-urban riots in his valley, pre-collective bargaining agreements, pre-powerful systemwide governance, pre-strong concern for cultural diversity and sex equity, pre-reversions and painful recessions, pre-global economy, and pre-Lawrence Campus. It was, however, precisely these trends and forces that faced President John Dimitry. No longer could a college's development flow spontaneously from sheer presidential "personality" and a purportedly shared governance system.

## **Dr. John R. Dimitry 1975 - 1996**

John Dimitry's years as president were carried out subject to not one but three successive governing boards: the Massachusetts Board of Regional Community Colleges (MBRCC), the Board of Regents (BOR), and the Higher Education Coordinating Council (HECC); a strong local Board of Trustees with legislatively driven powers; a series of collective bargaining agreements; and an internal advisory system, the All-College Council, which was free to advise on all matters of collegewide concern not dictated by any other body, law, or policy. He inherited an institution accustomed to a strong leader.

Describing himself as "old fashioned" and "policy driven," he essentially followed the rules that constrained him but beyond that vigorously pursued his vision for the college working with a stable organizational structure and focusing more on authority and accountability than on culture or process. He didn't court popularity and was forceful and decisive when necessary in the face of pressures from within and without. He put himself out on a limb lobbying relentlessly for the substantial funds necessary to complete the build out of the Haverhill campus and establish, renovate, and expand the Lawrence Campus. And he advocated strenuously for equitable funding of all of public higher education and adequate financial aid for students in need.

Having himself gone from "high school dropout" to college president, John Dimitry was a model for community college students, visible proof that each person can pursue formal education and lifelong learning in their own fashion and at their own pace and be successful. Coming from Detroit and having left high school to go to work at a young age and only later earning his GED, undergraduate and graduate degrees, he could relate to mill cities and people who didn't "have life handed to them." He felt at home coming to the Merrimack Valley.

When he arrived in Massachusetts shortly after Michael Dukakis had been elected governor, President Dimitry found a state and an institution in crisis, the first of several such crises. The budgets of all state agencies had been slashed by 10% and Northern Essex was no exception. And the college had no priorities for moving forward. It clearly could not be "all things to all people." It was experiencing growing pains and searching for an identity, a search that triggered strong differences of opinion. Throughout his years as president, debates persisted around career oriented vs traditional liberal arts programs, the existence and role of the Center for Business and Industry and "manpower training" initiatives, the pursuit of international ventures, the need for extension centers and multiple campus-

es, the allocation of resources and the attrition of full-time faculty. Even the gift of the Prudential Building caused dissension because although it enabled the college to significantly expand programs and services, it did so by stretching resources without the benefit of additional operating funds. All of the debates were fueled by a shrinking base of state funding and periodic threats of government downsizing, reorganization of higher education, mergers and closures. The rift was particularly strong between the president and the local faculty union. A period of hard fought grievances and bitter statewide collective bargaining failures resulted in a “censure” of the president by the local union at a time when he was serving as chairman of the Community College Presidents Council. It was in some ways ironic in that he had been the founding president of the faculty union at Wayne State University in Detroit and prided himself on the fact that he never laid off a full-time NECC employee during his 20 years as president.

Criticized by some, others extolled his vision and leadership. By the time of his retirement early in 1996 after 20 years as president, he had achieved significant triumphs for Northern Essex:

- Despite several fiscal crises, between 1986 and 1996, the college's budget nearly doubled.
- Enrollment of both day and evening students increased dramatically including enrollment of minority students.
- The curriculum built to over 80 degree and certificate programs and its focus on liberal arts and business programs expanded to include certificate programs specifically designed to prepare students for employment.
- The college became a comprehensive multicampus institution with acquisition of the Prudential Building in the heart of downtown Lawrence (considered by President Dimitry to be his proudest achievement).
- NECC's regionally and nationally recognized Center for Business and Industry (CBI) was established and flourishing serving the needs of area employers.
- The institution earned two reaccreditations by NEASC, each for the maximum ten-year period.
- The college remained free of bonded indebtedness; a private sector fundraising initiative was undertaken; a capital outlay reserve was created; and operating reserves were gradually being replenished after six bad budget years.
- Many partnerships (documented in annual Cooperative Ventures Reports) were established with area school systems, colleges and universities, social agencies, employers, and labor organizations, among others. Many were designed to serve

the needs of minorities and limited English speaking persons, those needing financial assistance, and persons with disabilities.

The college underwent dramatic change during President Dimitry's tenure. It had found an identity, one that valued accessibility, partnership, workforce development, and educational excellence. But it had struggled to get there and it was eager for change.

### **Dr. David Hartleb 1996-2011**

President Hartleb assumed the helm of Northern Essex in 1996 after a 28-year career at the University of Cincinnati. He came at a time when the college was looking for someone to lead it into the next century. It was looking for a new style of leadership, a listener and consensus builder. It needed a president who would transform the culture of the institution. A self-described change agent, President Hartleb sought not only to make the college a better institution but to make it a different institution, one characterized by a culture of inquiry, of continual individual and institutional appraisal and assessment. He was committed to fostering the success of students and the professional development of employees in an increasingly more complex environment. Redirecting resources, both staff and financial, he effectively ushered the college into the world of technology and use of its tools to inform institutional management and enhance the delivery of programs of instruction to promote student success. In order to effect major changes in the college's culture, he also implemented major changes in its organizational structure in part by laying off or reassigning nearly all members of the senior management team in place in 1995.

In 1996 the college was not only prepared to change its culture, it was also prepared to grow its infrastructure. And grow it did. Public/private partnerships led to major developments in college facilities including completion of construction of the Technology Center in Haverhill (subsequently named in his honor); completion of renovations of the Behrakis Student Center in Haverhill and of the science and health professions areas in the Dimitry Building in Lawrence; two new Lawrence facilities: the Louise Haffner Fournier Education Center and lease of NECC Riverwalk; and to state approval of a \$24 million appropriation for a new Allied Health and Technology Center in Lawrence. Enrollment increased by 33%; minority enrollment increased by 272%; Lawrence Campus enrollment increased by 106%; Degrees and Certificates awarded increased 54%; and the College's endowment increased by 545%.

Examples of additional accomplishments achieved during President Hartleb's 15-year tenure include:

- An Office of Institutional Advancement was created, the NECC Foundation Board was revitalized to assist in private fundraising, and the college's first capital campaign was completed raising \$2 million from private individuals, business and corporate donors, community leaders, alumni, and employees.

- The college successfully utilized Appreciative Inquiry, a strengths-based approach to planning, to develop a strategic plan for 2008-2011 and established that approach as part of the college culture.
- The college community completed an intensive self-study process which led to reaccreditation by the NEASC for the maximum ten-year period.
- Northern Essex was one of a select group of community colleges across the country chosen to join Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count, a national initiative to help more community college students succeed, leading to a revitalization of learning outcomes assessment as well as the planning and implementation of numerous student success strategies on both the Haverhill and Lawrence campuses.
- Partnering with area employers, new academic programs were created in high-demand fields such as sleep technology, computer forensics, lab science, paramedic technology, and education.
- The Lawrence Campus was designated as an Hispanic Serving Institution opening up new sources of funding and leading to its first five-year grant from the US Department of Education's Title V Developing Hispanic-Serving Institutions Program (\$2.2 million).
- In addition to other collaborative ventures, in the face of a down economy, the college partnered with area employers to secure \$500,000 in training funds through the Workforce Training Grant, a state program that provides training for incumbent workers.
- In an effort to afford flexible pathways to educational achievement, the college undertook several initiatives, for example: It was granted designation as a GED (now called HiSET High School Equivalency) testing center; a "Seeding Success" program was implemented with the Haverhill and Lawrence school systems; and an innovative Early College program was begun with Amesbury High School attracting state and regional recognition.

President Hartleb promised from the outset to transform the institution and in many respects he did. In doing so, he left the college open to further growth and renewal, well poised to move forward under its next president.



## **Dr. Lane A. Glenn 2011 - The Present**

A former community college student himself, Dr. Glenn had a lengthy career as a community college professor and administrator in Michigan before coming to Northern Essex as Vice-President of Academic Affairs in 2006 and, five years later, being chosen by the NECC Board as the college's fourth president. He brought to the presidency a wealth of experience, energy and new ideas and most particularly an especially strong sense of the valuable role community colleges play in transforming individual lives and meeting community and global needs. His transition into the presidency was smooth partly because he was an internal candidate but more so because of his personality and leadership style. A self-proclaimed optimist, he has had a substantial impact on the "culture of openness" within the institution. A skilled fiscal manager, he has strengthened the college's financial planning system and streamlined the budget process. A nationally recognized expert in Appreciative Inquiry and Strategic Planning, he has led the college's efforts in these processes with a strengths-based and highly inclusive approach. He has promoted a "culture of learning" across the college and he has made improvement of student learning and successful career preparation personal and institutional priorities. He has generated outside investment by providing leadership in all aspects of fundraising including grants development, relationship building, and cultivating donor relationships in the external community.

Dr. Glenn's leadership and accomplishments during his first six years in office reflect his passion for the community college mission to provide access to higher education and a full range of support services insuring that all students with a will to learn and work will be successful. Hallmarks of his vision for the college are solidly grounded in his perception of community colleges as drivers of economic growth and his strong belief in the power of partnerships most especially with communities, area employers, four-year colleges and universities, K-12 school systems, and government leaders. Examples of dynamic partnerships he has forged include the following:

- Building on the work of presidents Dimitry and Hartleb and in partnership with college faculty and staff and community and business leaders, President Glenn has expanded higher education opportunities in the city of Lawrence opening two facilities in 2014: the Dr. Ibrahim El-Hefni Allied Health & Technology Center and 420 Common Street, a multi-use facility featuring classrooms, computer labs, a bank, a bookstore, and a cafe.
- He has brought bachelor degree completion programs to the City of Lawrence, whose residents have one of the lowest levels of higher education attainment in the state. Regis College (Massachusetts) and Lyndon State College (Vermont) now offer programs on the Lawrence Campus in areas such as public health, nursing, computer science, art, and music.

- President Glenn helped create and is the chairman of the board of the “Lawrence Partnership,” a coalition of Lawrence-based businesses and organizations committed to the economic development of the city. Founded in 2014, this Partnership has launched a million-dollar venture loan fund for small- and mid-sized businesses in the city; created a “Hire Local” campaign; and formed a training consortium to improve workforce development.
- The president has worked with NECC’s Center for Corporate and Community Education in partnership with local police departments and the Essex County Sheriff’s Office to provide training for public safety providers. In 2014, The NECC Methuen Police Academy opened and in 2015 the Essex County Sheriff’s Office began offering its 12-week training program, both on the Haverhill Campus. In 2016, the president was asked by the Commissioner of the Department of Higher Education to chair a statewide committee tasked with assessing and making recommendations regarding the future of police education in the Commonwealth.
- As the result of a competitive bid process, in June of 2017, Northern Essex was selected by the Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board to assume management and operational responsibilities for the ValleyWorks One-Stop Career Center, one of sixteen such regional employment centers across the state. Currently funded by a two million dollar a year grant from the US Department of Labor, the center has locations in Haverhill and Lawrence and provides employment and training services for over 10,000 job seekers and 700 employers a year.
- Recognizing its benefits, President Glenn has expanded collaborative partnerships with local high schools and vocational technical schools with particular attention to dual enrollment and training programs. Most recently the college partnered with the Greater Lawrence Technical School and Whittier Regional Vocational Technical High School to create a pipeline of trained workers with advanced manufacturing skills.
- In the fall of 2018, the president looks forward to expanding the college’s presence in Haverhill by opening a Culinary Arts and Hospitality Center with support from the state and in partnership with Whittier Regional Vocational Technical High School, Endicott College, and area employers.
- President Glenn has brought new energy to the college’s efforts to address workforce needs by promoting corporate training programs enabling employers such as Raytheon to train incumbent workers in advanced technologies. In re-

sponse to workforce needs in other industries, he has promoted associate degree programs in areas such as hospitality, business management, health care practice, and lab science.

- He has provided leadership for the college's involvement in Achieving the Dream with a special focus on students of color and low income. He is passionate about finding ways to help students achieve their educational goals including adoption of enhanced academic advising, new tutoring resources, a college success skills course, and most recently alliances with institutions in the Dominican Republic creating pathways for recent immigrants to earn college credits at NECC.

## **Presidential Visions - Institutional Realities**

It is virtually impossible for a presidential vision to be realized without the hard work, support and commitment of literally hundreds of resources: employees, students, alumni, legislators, individuals, and organizations. It is impossible to include in this brief epilogue the kinds of detail and data provided in the History written by Dr. John Spurk. However, following this Epilogue is an extensive list of selected Highlights from the years 1986-2017. The wide range of annual snapshots of NECC over the past thirty-one years is derived from institutional Self-Studies, Master/Strategic Plans, Annual and other Reports and publications, and written and anecdotal material from several college employees. Representative but by no means exhaustive, it is likely to engender in readers an appreciation for and a sense of pride in the richness of the college in all its facets. This is particularly the case for the significant but dwindling numbers of individuals privileged to work at the college under all four presidents.

## **The State Of The College - 2017**

The colleges' four presidents have effectively navigated the institution through a host of challenges and opportunities. Each has built on earlier successes and each has worked internally and externally to bring the college to its current position of strength and quality evidenced in large part by the following:

- While the organizational structure of the college remains hierarchical, the influence of that hierarchy is leveled by a culture of involvement, openness, and ready access to important information by stakeholders. Planning documents and decisions of institutional significance are not imposed but rather flow from a "ground up" process involving all individuals to be impacted. Much is accomplished through committees, task forces, and teams often including student representation, and much is accomplished informally.
- In the face of declining state support, Northern Essex is looking less like a state-funded community college and more

like a private institution. The leadership of the college has monitored and anticipated this statewide trend and taken appropriate steps to: identify alternative sources of revenue; devise creative ways of offering programs and services more effectively; advance entrepreneurial activities; invest in an efficient and cost-effective infrastructure; partner with area schools to leverage their facilities; and intensify private sector fundraising efforts in support of both capital and operational expenses.

- Enrollment statistics today tell us about who our students are and how their characteristics reflect local and national demographic trends, access, and economic swings with financial implications. As of fall 2016 they are: 47% are minority (39% Hispanic); 60% are female; 69% are age 25 or younger; 65% study part-time; and 87% are Massachusetts residents with Lawrence and then Haverhill being the top two feeder cities. Approximately 65% receive financial aid and nearly 45% are first generation college students.
- In the words of President Glenn, Northern Essex “...embraces values of global citizenship and prizes the richness of cultural wealth in our diverse communities.” It strives to be a model of diversity and inclusion that opens doors and creates pathways for people who might otherwise be disenfranchised from the promise of public higher education. Because the college values success as well as access, once through the door, supplemental interventions are in place such as early warning systems, self-paced/individualized instruction, tutoring online or in tutoring centers to support the student’s progress.
- The college has welcomed technology in every facet of its operation. Its integrated, relational software system addresses a wide spectrum of institutional needs including fiscal management and institutional research in support of data-driven student and program assessment. Library services include online literacy skills tutorials and electronic access to a host of journals and data bases. Publications are online. Some units are moving towards electronic filing systems. Further increasing student access, online programming is growing exponentially as faculty have embraced new technologies and continue to develop innovative courses (and programs) that are pedagogically sound benefitting richly from the support and services provided by the Center for Instructional Technology (CIT).
- An Academic Master Plan, developed with broad based input, posted on the college website, and correlated with the college’s strategic plan, organizes and prioritizes all cam-

puswide initiatives. Academic degree and certificate programs are systematically evaluated on a rotating basis and decisions to archive, modify, or develop new programs are informed by comprehensive, regularly produced and readily available data. Reviews include, among other factors, consideration of student demand and regional workforce trends, and often involve area employers and representative of institutions that receive graduates of the program.

- Northern Essex complements its academic offerings with a strong focus on corporate training initiatives that address the workforce development needs of employers across the Merrimack Valley. Keeping attuned to regional trends, it offers programs designed to develop new skills sets and certifications for enrollees most recently in advanced manufacturing technologies and health care fields as well as programs designed to help an emerging immigrant population better assimilate into the local workforce.

Partnerships are central to all of the above – partnerships with employers, secondary schools, higher education institutions, civic leaders, neighborhood advocates, and elected officials among others – and partnerships within the institution as its members work together around shared goals. Thus far, partnerships have been a hallmark of President Glenn’s administration.

Despite current fiscal and enrollment challenges, Northern Essex is strong and, as always throughout her history, resilient. Given the state of the college and President Glenn’s personal skills and priorities, the institution is well positioned to keep the ball of twine rolling and realizing its mission:

*We provide a welcoming environment focused on teaching and learning—strongly committed to unlocking the potential within each student and empowering our diverse community of learners to meet their individual goals. We are a community college dedicated to creating vibrant and innovative opportunities that encourage excellence and enhance the cultural and economic life of our region.*  
(Approved by the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education in March of 2015).

## Selected NECC Highlights 1985 – 2017

### 1985

- Following the civil disturbances in Lawrence in August of 1984, the Board of Regents (BOR) supported NECC's request to expand its presence in the city with an initial nine-month grant of \$226,500 and the college's Lawrence Education-Employment Project (LEEP) opened its doors in the Lawrence Public Library in January of 1985.

### 1986

- The college celebrated its 25th anniversary with an extensive year-long calendar of events.
- The Northeast Rapid Response Team was located at the college with the express purpose of helping displaced workers secure training and jobs.
- The 1986-1989 Agreement between the Board of Regents and the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), AFL-CIO Service Employees International Union, AFL/CIO and International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, AFL/CIO went into effect.
- In December 1986, DCE faculty voted to be represented by the Massachusetts Community College Council (MCCC).

### 1987

- The Final Report of the Capital Outlay Task Force *Planning for a Lawrence Campus* was produced.
- The Northern Essex Faculty Association voted to censure college President John R. Dimitry during a period when collective bargaining had stalled and he was serving as Chairperson of the Community College Presidents' Council. Following the censure, the president initiated a series of actions intended to improve communication and participation in institutional decision making.
- The AT&T/CWA Worker Assistance Center opened and was temporarily housed at NECC to provide education, training and support services to approximately 1,500 displaced AT&T workers.
- Long term efforts of many members of the college community culminated in the establishment of a Child Care Center on the Haverhill Campus.

### 1988

- The BOR published an *Educational Needs Analysis of the City of Lawrence* and the college submitted a *Proposal for a Comprehensive Northern Essex Lawrence Campus* to the Commonwealth's Division of Capital Planning and Operations (DCPO) (now called Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance (DCAMM)). Given the critical need, \$18 million in capital outlay funds was authorized for a campus.
- The college community voted to dissolve the Academic Council and created in its place the All-College Council. The purpose of the new

body was to establish an effective structure for input, discussion, and consensus building.

- The governing body for public higher education, the BOR, mandated a shift from “master planning” and management by objectives to “strategic planning.”

### 1989

- An NECC professor was loaned to the City of Lawrence to serve as acting principal of Lawrence High School on an interim basis.
- Sert, Jackson and Associates, Inc. completed a *Northern Essex Community College Study for a Consolidated Campus in Lawrence*.
- The college’s Mission and Goals Statement was revised.
- NECC conducted a Community College Goals Inventory (CCGI) through the Educational Testing Service. Results indicated strong support for the college’s goals but identified other areas warranting improvement such as the level of student proficiency in reading, writing, and analysis, and openness to new ideas and thinking.

### 1990

- Between 1988 and 1990 the college was subject to three reversions resulting in a loss of more than one million dollars in state funding.
- The college underwent its third successful Self-Study as part of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) accreditation process and subsequently was awarded a ten-year reaccreditation.
- After years of traditional bargaining and reaching an impasse, DCE faculty went on strike at 12 of the 15 community college campuses. After resumption of good faith negotiations, the first contract between the BOR and MCCC/MTA/NEA for July 1990 through June 1993 covering both full- and part-time faculty/professional staff and DCE faculty was ratified.
- The Massachusetts Transfer Compact was established guaranteeing Massachusetts’ community college graduates admission and a full transfer of credits toward a bachelor’s degree at state four-year institutions provided certain GPA and general education core requirements were met.

### 1991

- The Higher Education Coordinating Council (HECC) was created (replacing the Board of Regents) in an effort by the Weld administration to centralize power, authority and responsibility over the entire system of public higher education in the Commonwealth.
- The Prudential Insurance Company of America formally donated to the Commonwealth a 68,000 square foot building in the heart of the city of Lawrence for use as a permanent NECC Lawrence Campus. It was subsequently named for the college’s second president, John R. Dimitry, who had led the effort to secure the building.
- \$900,000 was authorized and released by the Commonwealth to

complete Phase I renovations at the Lawrence Campus.

### **1992**

- The college's mission statement was revised.
- The Women's Resource Network (subsequently renamed the Women's Center) was created in response to student interest and leadership. The Center functioned as a drop-in center and informational clearinghouse and offered weekly discussions, speakers, and other events designed to support women returning to school.
- Two extension centers opened in Methuen.
- The Registered Nursing Program moved from Haverhill to the Lawrence Campus.

### **1993**

- The College's Center for Business and Industry (CBI) was selected as one of the first of eight Supplier Training Centers across the country sponsored by a national consortium committed to principles of Total Quality Management. The consortium included corporate giants such as Motorola, SEMATECH, Texas Instruments, Xerox, Kodak, Texaco, Chrysler, and Bayer.
- The president and trustees set aside \$500,000 a year in capital funds in part to competitively position the college in the area of academic computing. At that time, the college had only four poorly equipped computer labs and no access to the Internet.
- The president directed senior administrative staff to embark on a comprehensive and multifaceted two-year quality improvement effort. Chief initiatives undertaken were designed to contribute to regional economic development, improve capacity to assess student outcomes, and enhance accountability of all major organizational units by examining performance, productivity and costs.
- The Wellness Center was established.

### **1994**

- The college committed a significant increase in financial and human resources to technology.
- A shuttle bus service between campuses was piloted.
- NECC and Lesley College executed Joint Transfer Agreements in Early Childhood Education and Mental Health Technology.
- Nearly 40,000 people viewed the Vietnam Veterans Moving Wall when it was displayed at the college for a week during the summer.
- The Master Plan for 1994-1999 included Board/Presidential Goals for the first time.
- The Paralegal Studies Program was the first such program at a Massachusetts community college to be approved by the American Bar Association (ABA) for a five year period.



## 1995

- The college underwent a successful interim evaluation by the NEASC. Its emphasis was on the continuing development of the Lawrence campus and its relationship to the Haverhill campus.
- The capital outlay bill authorized \$7.5 million for a new building on the Haverhill campus.
- The UMass Lowell/NECC collaboration expanded including a joint International Study Program.
- An NECC extension center opened at the Methuen Mall (now “The Loop”).
- The Criminal Justice and Paralegal Programs moved to the Lawrence Campus and the Dental Lab was constructed.
- The Commonwealth released \$1.4 million in capital outlay funds to complete Phase II science laboratories and an additional \$2.5 million to complete development of the Lawrence campus.
- Funded by HECC through one of a series of Eisenhower MRVIS (Merrimack River Valley Investigations in Science) grants, a team of faculty members developed a series of interactive workshops (“It’s Sedimentary, My Dear Watson,” “Last of the Red Hot Lavas,” and more) designed to improve the teaching of earth science at the middle school level. The programs were broadcast by Mass LearnPike to thousands of science teachers from 165 school districts located in 17 states.
- The first online course was offered at the college.
- The college’s paralegal programs moved to the Lawrence Campus within three blocks of three court houses and the Trial Court Law Library.
- Over 1500 student satisfaction surveys were mailed to currently enrolled students and another 450 to students who had withdrawn from some or all of their courses with a return rate of 21.2%.

## 1996

- In January, John R. Dimitry retired and David Hartleb began his tenure as the college’s third president.
- The Board of Higher Education (BHE) became the governing body for public higher education in Massachusetts replacing HECC.
- The Respiratory Care, Radiologic Technology and Medical Assistant Programs moved to Lawrence.
- The state announced the Public Education Endowment Incentive Program in an effort to encourage private contributors, including alumni, to invest in community colleges. The program provided a one for two match for donations.
- After an extended period of highly contentious collective bargaining, the Agreement between HECC and MCCC/MTA for July 1995 through June 1998 was finally executed on February 29, 1996.
- A comprehensive faculty needs survey administered by a Media Task Force overwhelmingly indicated a demand for computer-based instructional technology, training, equipment and software.
- Following the massive fire at Malden Mills in Lawrence, the college

stepped in to offer ESL and other training to 3,000 displaced workers.

### **1997**

- Spurred by the state's Incentive Program, the college secured \$384,121 in donations generating \$181,236 in matching funds to be used to create an endowment fund. The Advancement Team was aided by a newly revitalized NECC Foundation, the Women of NECC, and the Alumni Association. Donations came from many sources including alumni, large corporations, small businesses, private donors and community foundations.
- The student services area underwent a significant reorganization by its new vice-president (the first vice-president named at the college).
- The Student's Rights and Responsibilities: a Code of Conduct was developed.

### **1998**

- After a comprehensive 18-month dynamic and inclusive strategic planning process, the college community developed a series of Institutional Priorities subsequently endorsed by the All-College Council, accepted by the president, and approved by the Board of Trustees on June 2, 1998.
- In 1998-1999, the college delivered career workshops to 2,000 public school students, coordinated business externships for 40 public school teachers, and helped introduce Capital Community Service Learning into the Greater Haverhill, Lawrence, and Newburyport School to Career Programs.
- The college received a three-year US Department of Education Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) grant titled a Bridge to Success. The main goal of the project was to develop, implement, and disseminate a portable multi-media based bridge model for re-engineering college courses enabling students with limited English proficiency to make a smooth transition to mainstream academic courses.
- The Teaching and Learning Center was formally established providing an area where faculty could meet and receive assistance in the development of instructional materials.
- An Academic Advising Center was established.
- A Master Space Utilization Committee and Classroom Capital Improvement Committee selected Education Alliance to produce a report that provided the foundation for the planned reconfiguration of the Haverhill Campus and pursuit of BHE Capital Improvement Program grant funds.

### **1999**

- Having completed an innovative strategic planning process, the president crafted a ten-year vision to provide a clear focus for institutional decision making based on four principles: opportunity, challenge, respect, and inspiration.

- The college received a \$400,000 grant from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development to fund the Lawrence Business Assistance Center (LBAC) operated in collaboration with the City of Lawrence's Small Business Administration (SBA) Business Assistance Center to train, educate and assist Hispanic business owners and entrepreneurs.
- The Commonwealth established the Workforce Training Fund for the training of incumbent workers. CBI aggressively partnered with Merrimack Valley companies to secure over a half million dollars in training funds from this source.
- Figures released by the BHE revealed that Northern Essex had more students enrolled in noncredit job skills training courses than any other Massachusetts' community college.
- NECC was designated by the Executive Office of Administration and Finance's Human Services Division as one of five regional training centers across the state and subsequently offered training opportunities to state and municipal employees in two technically equipped classrooms on the Haverhill Campus renovated by the state at a cost of \$175,000.
- The Web Page Design and Development Certificate Program was launched. Computer faculty developed the program led by an NECC alumnus who was a part-time instructor, member of the Computer and Information Sciences Program Advisory Committee, and a senior engineer at Mitre Corporation.
- The college opened its Amesbury Street Extension Campus in Lawrence.
- A Center for Alternative Studies (later named the Center for Adult and Alternative Studies) opened on the Haverhill Campus, providing a centralized location for students seeking to earn college credits for their life and work experiences.
- The state created the Community College Access Grant which more than doubled the amount of aid available to students.
- The president contracted with CampusWorks, Inc. to review Y2K readiness, assess future network capability, identify implementation gaps and provide project management assistance for identified problems in the college's Banner system.
- The college joined the North of Boston Library Exchange (NOBLE), a consortium of 25 public and academic libraries sharing a database of more than 2.5 million items.

## 2000

- After working for a year without a new contract, the MCCC/MTA Agreement with the BHE for July 1999 through June 2002 was executed on June 14, 2000.
- The college successfully underwent its fourth Self-Study and NEASC reaccreditation.
- In 1999-2000, the Teaching in Community Program was implemented to bring together faculty from diverse disciplines and at different stages in their teaching careers.

- The college began offering “Web Camp” for the purpose of providing faculty who were preparing to teach online with training and one-on-one coaching.
- The college engaged in an evaluation of its student orientation program and implemented a revised program in 2001.
- During the 2000-2001 academic year, a chapter of Phi Theta Kappa honor society was established providing an opportunity for students to be recognized for superior academic achievement.

## 2001

- As a first step in creating learning outcomes, an interdisciplinary committee identified three major competencies to be incorporated into the outcomes framework of each academic program (writing, critical thinking, and computer fluency).
- The college implemented the new Massachusetts Community College Student Grievance Procedure.
- Having an Hispanic enrollment of at least 25%, the Lawrence campus was designated as an Hispanic Serving Institution by the US Department of Education (the only such institution in New England at that time to be so designated).
- The Center for Business and Industry (CBI) assumed responsibility for noncredit programming historically overseen by the Division of Continuing Education and Community Services and a new division, Workforce Development and Community Education was created. The first noncredit certificate in Project Management and Customer Service was subsequently delivered.

## 2002

- The college was awarded its first five-year \$2.2 million US Department of Education Title V grant to improve student services, retention rates and graduation rates of its Hispanic students.
- The Career Planning and Advising Center (CPAC) opened in the Dimitry Building in Lawrence funded by the college's Title V grant in an effort to provide full equity with Haverhill for one-stop services for students.
- Between 2002 and 2004, 31 articulation agreements with both public and private area colleges were approved and/or updated providing a seamless transfer for NECC graduates seeking to earn bachelor degrees. The programs included, for example, transfer to a program in human services at Lesley University and in education at Salem State University (then Salem State College).
- Following a tragic incident at Virginia Polytechnic Institute, a Campus Safety Response Team (CSRT) comprised of administrators, faculty and staff was formed to address concerns about violence prevention.

## 2003

- NECC received a generous \$1 million donation from the family of Ourania Behrakis who served on the NECC Board of Trustees until

her untimely death in 1995.

- The college received a grant from the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners to develop an information literacy center.
- A four-year \$122,000 CCAMPIS (Child Care Access Means Parents in School) grant from the US Department of Education enabled the college to expand evening childcare services on the Lawrence Campus.
- A three-year \$250,000 grant from the National Science Foundation allowed the college to implement the MAST (Math Applications Shaping Tomorrow) Project revitalizing the mathematics curriculum with relevant, technical workplace applications.
- The college's first capital campaign was completed raising two million dollars from private individuals, business and corporate donors, community leaders, alumni, and college staff and faculty.
- The Strategic Plan for 2003-2006 was developed with student success as its single strategic goal.
- The Honors Experience (initiated in 1998) was awarded Commonwealth Honors Program status guaranteeing participants admission to Massachusetts state colleges and universities to students completing projects with a grade of B or higher.
- The college used a media and image survey to obtain information from over 600 current and/or recent students about topics such as name recognition, advertising recall, image perception, program familiarity, and website utilization.
- An Institutional Effectiveness Committee (later incorporated into the Achieving the Dream (ATD) initiative as its "Data Team") identified ten Key Performance Indicators for measuring institutional effectiveness and student success.

## 2004

- A Program Outcomes and Assessment Manual was developed.
- The college launched its collaborative, team-based Process Management (PM) initiative.
- Because of its success in securing grants for companies from the Massachusetts Workforce Training Fund (approximately 2.5 million over 6 years), the college's Center for Business and Industry (CBI) was identified as one of the top ten training providers statewide, the only community college to be included.
- Over \$100,000 worth of sophisticated electronic testing and measuring equipment was donated to the college by Lucent Technologies.
- Northern Essex received a grant from the TSB Charitable Foundation to provide equipment and supplies for a Dental Sealant Clinic for children staffed by area dentists and students from the college's dental assisting program.
- 3M Touch Systems Community Relations Council in Methuen donated \$9,900 to NECC's Massachusetts Educational Opportunity Program (MEOP), an after-school program in the Lawrence School System for students between the ages of 13 and 17.
- The college initiated a campaign to raise funds for the Chester W.

Hawrylcw Theater, named for a former NECC academic dean, to transform Lecture Hall A in the Spurk Building into a well-designed theater for students and the community.

- Funded by grants from the Commonwealth Corporation's Extended Care Career Ladder Initiative (ECCLI), employees at Nevins Nursing & Rehabilitation Center, SunBridge Healthcare Corporation, and the Home Health Visiting Nurses Association began attending classes offered by NECC at their workplaces to improve skills and job prospects and, in many cases, basic English language proficiency.
- Under the auspices of a \$2 million five-year grant from the US Department of Education (the English Language Acquisition National Professional Development Program), the college expanded its early childhood and elementary education programs.
- Ten new minority full-time faculty members were hired increasing the percentage of minorities teaching at the college to 10% in the fall of 2004.
- Fitchburg State College (now University) began offering bachelor's degree completion programs in Early Childhood and Elementary Education on the Haverhill Campus.
- In October, the NECC faculty association voted to "work to rule" in response to a statewide collective bargaining dispute severely limiting faculty participation in college service activities.
- Recognizing the increasing importance of technology, in December, the college created a new cabinet level position, Chief Information Officer.

## 2005

- The 2005 Interim Report to the NEASC was successfully completed and focused on two areas identified for special emphasis: learning outcomes and diversity.
- The new Hartleb Technology Center was dedicated, the first building to be constructed on the Haverhill Campus since it was built in 1971. It was funded by \$2 million in private funds from individual and corporate donors, and \$7.5 million from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.
- The college opened the newly renovated Ourania Behrakis Student Center housing student services including admissions, assessment, registration, financial aid, advising, career development, learning accommodations, deaf and hard of hearing, and bursar services all in one location.
- The NECC Foundation, Women of NECC, and Alumni Boards partnered to hold a first annual signature event, a Murder Mystery Dinner Auction at DiBurros in Bradford and raised \$26,000 for the NECC Fund. The purpose of the Fund is to benefit student scholarships, academic programs, and the college's endowment.
- Northern Essex became the first community college in the state to offer a certificate in critical care nursing.
- Building on the work of several individuals and groups, the Program Review Committee developed a Program Review Handbook using a

Process Management approach.

- The college provided enhanced opportunities for students to participate in Learning Communities (both integrated and linked) offering 33 sections between 2000 and 2005. In the fall of 2005, a new position of Learning Communities Coach was created.
- A Director of Program Review and Outcomes Assessment was hired and created a Guide for Developing and Implementing an Outcomes Assessment Plan that emphasized the use of a team approach including program coordinators, faculty, area employers, and faculty from four-year colleges to which graduates most often transfer.
- Banner Self-Service, a web-based tool, was implemented allowing enrolled students, faculty and staff access to information, resources and services online.

## 2006

- The Louise Haffner Fournier Education Center at 78-82 Amesbury Street in Lawrence was dedicated.
- The Alumni Association celebrated its 35 year anniversary. The Association was founded in 1971 by President Bentley for the purpose of reconnecting alumni and raising awareness of the college.
- The BHE approved a new associate in science degree in Paramedic Technology. The program was developed following a needs assessment conducted by an advisory board of fire, police, emergency personnel, and ambulance company representatives.
- The college launched MyNECC, an online self-service feature for students and faculty. The software allows students to register for classes, access grades, perform program audits, print unofficial transcripts and course schedules, and view their financial aid awards and semester bills.
- Track and Field was added to the athletic program as a varsity sport. (As of 2017, the team had produced several national champions and won 11 district championships.)

## 2007

- For the first time, the college used an Appreciative Inquiry (AI) strengths-based approach to updating its 2008-2011 strategic plan. The new “core values” developed included student engagement, collaboration, personal and professional growth, respect, diversity, access and opportunity, and excellence.
- An Academic Master Plan was developed and a copy made available on the college’s website.
- The Technical Training Foundation (established by the late Dr. Ibrahim El-Hefni) pledged one million dollars to NECC in support of the Allied Health & Technology Center to be built in Lawrence (later dedicated in Dr. El Hefni’s honor).
- NECC’s first fully online program, Associate Degree in Criminal Justice, was announced.
- The college partnered with local veterans to hold its first educational

stand down.

- The college submitted a “Report on the Status of Support Services Provided to Online Services” to the NEASC-CIHE addressing the college’s ability to provide the same level of services to online and on-ground students.
- NECC was selected as one of four community colleges in Massachusetts to participate in Achieving the Dream, a multiyear national initiative to help more community college students succeed, particularly those who have traditionally faced the most significant barriers to success including low-income students and students of color. The college has since become a “Leader College” in the Achieving the Dream Network.
- Electronic survey capabilities were implemented in Banner supporting student elections, a student satisfaction survey, and the AI interviewing process in its first year of use.
- A Process Management project on Student Success in Online Learning was conducted. Based on the results, CIT and the Academic Advising Office collaborated to create the Provide Support web-based, online advising tool.
- The women’s volleyball team was named NJCAA Region XXI champions (the team has won six regional championships as of 2017).

## 2008

- NECC introduced a new Associate Degree in Music designed for students who want to transfer to a four-year music program.
- The Environmental & Sustainability Committee was formed to integrate economic, social, and environmental principles of sustainability throughout the curriculum and operations of the college.
- NECC announced development of a fast track Business Management Associate Degree program designed for working adults.
- Supported in part by a National Science Foundation grant, the college introduced a Computer Forensics Certificate, a joint effort of the Criminal Justice and Computer Information Sciences Departments.
- Faculty from many disciplines explored a theme across the curriculum: Can democracy prevent genocide?
- Northern Essex created a Student Engagement Center designed to complement the academic experience by giving students the opportunity to get involved, connect with other students, and develop leadership skills.
- The Board of Trustees developed a self-assessment tool.
- The college implemented its own “Leadership Academy” for employees. In a yearlong experience, participants learned about community colleges, developed their leadership skills, and completed a project that addressed a college need.
- The college added a new program, an Associate in Applied Science Degree Program in Laboratory Science. Development of the program was initiated by science faculty to serve two outcomes: transfer to a four-year institution and entry into the workforce. The faculty



were awarded a National Science Foundation Advanced Technological Education (NSF-ATE) grant that provided funding for curriculum development and startup equipment.

- The college adopted the new Massachusetts Student Code of Conduct.
- A collegewide Emergency Notification System was implemented allowing members of the college community to receive safety and emergency text messages on their mobile devices.
- At its October meeting, the College Advisory Council members voted to change the name of that body to the All College Assembly to better capture its “town meeting” character.

## **2009**

- The college adopted a new Core Academic Vision Statement identifying five core academic skills deemed necessary for students to become self-aware, engaged members of the communities in which they live and work: Communication, Global Awareness, Information Literacy, Quantitative Reasoning, and Science and Technology.
- CIT expanded its services to the Lawrence Campus to meet the growing need for faculty support in online programs in health and other areas.
- The college initiated a College Success Seminar (CSS) to improve retention in college readiness and achievement in the first semester. The Seminar grew from serving 54 students in 2009 to more than 500 students in the fall of 2014. A proposal was made to change the course name to First Year Seminar (FYS) and to make the course a graduation requirement.
- In the fall, NECC implemented a pilot of Starfish Early Alert to track, support and encourage students enrolled in two or more developmental courses.

## **2010**

- The college community completed its 2010 NEASC Self-Study using an Appreciative Inquiry Process.
- The college expanded its presence in Lawrence with the opening of NECC Riverwalk in 26,000 square feet of renovated mill space.
- A redesigned public website was launched in an effort to improve the user experience for prospective students and the general public.
- Through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), the college received \$4.2 million for projects considered strategic investments and cost saving measures in the long run. Cabinet priorities for this one time funding included: upgrading technology infrastructure, enhancing the learning experience for students, and improving buildings and grounds.
- The Bentley Library opened an ArtSpace Gallery which showcases works from faculty, students and regional artists.
- As of the fall of 2010, all classrooms on the Haverhill and Lawrence campuses were transformed into “smart classrooms” with computer, web, and projection technology.

- The NECC Observer received a gold medalist certificate from the Columbia University Scholastic Press Association.

## 2011

- Development of the Strategic Plan for 2012-2015 began at the 2011 fall Convocation and was followed by more than 35 SOAR (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, Results) forums engaging the college's stakeholders.
- In AY 2010-2011, the Core Academic Skills Committee adopted a model that each degree program should include at least one course labeled as "intensive" in each of the six core academic skills: global awareness; information literacy; public presentation; quantitative reasoning; science and technology; and writing. Effective 2014, this was made a graduation requirement for newly admitted associate degree students.
- Along with tightening budgetary planning, development, and procurement processes, the college created an Investment Policy designed to balance increases in long-term capital growth with sufficient liquidity to ensure a reasonable degree of flexibility in the operations of the college.
- President David Hartleb retired and Dr. Lane Glenn began his tenure as the college's fourth president on July 1, 2011.

## 2012

- The college's internal participatory governance system, the All College Assembly, added an Information Technology Committee as a fifth standing committee.
- The name of the Corporate Education and Training Center was changed to The Center for Corporate and Community Education. (As of 2017, the Center focuses more exclusively on workforce development and more closely aligns its noncredit programs with the college's academic programs in concert with needs of the workforce. It has essentially ceased offering personal enrichment programs with the exception of limited programming for seniors.)
- After competing with 50 Achieving the Dream Leader Colleges across the nation, NECC received a \$100,000 Walmart PRESS For Completion grant to support efforts to better engage faculty (especially adjunct faculty) and staff in campus-based efforts to ensure more students have a better chance to stay in school and obtain a market-valued credential.
- The Academic Affairs area adopted a new Academic Master Plan (AMP) for 2012-2015 developed through an inclusive process within the unit. The Plan identified 12 priorities to set the direction for important decisions concerning resources, curriculum development, technology, planning, staffing, and a variety of student success initiatives.
- NECC began working with Salem State University (and with the University of Massachusetts Lowell in 2013) to award associate degrees through reverse transfer.

- Recognizing the significant financial barriers that impact student success and retention, the college committed \$200,000 annually to the Retention Scholarship and increased those funds to \$250,000 in AY 2014/2015.
- NECC formed a Clery Committee responsible for publication of the federally mandated Annual Security Report that includes important safety information and detailed crime statistics for the previous three years.

### 2013

- The Board of Trustees incurred the college's first long term debt in an effort to "green" the college by significantly reducing the amount of energy used on both campuses. The entire \$6.2 million project will be repaid over a 15 year period from the over \$300,000 in annual energy savings the college expects to realize each year.
- NECC accepted a three-year grant award of \$1,242,000 from the Massachusetts Life Sciences Center (MLSC): Capital Program. MLSC is a quasi-public agency created by the Massachusetts legislature in June 2006 and it supports capital projects that promote life sciences workforce development and training. This grant was used to construct new and upgrade existing labs on both the Haverhill and Lawrence campuses. The grant was supplemented with \$200,000 in privately leveraged funds from the Technical Training Foundation.
- The All College Assembly added a student representative to each of its standing committees and continued to transmit Assembly meetings by videoconferencing technology to facilitate intercampus attendance.
- Members of the Academic Affairs Leadership Team drafted a three-year Strategic Plan for Distance Education.
- The library started a student "help desk" in Haverhill which has since been expanded.
- The Admissions Team implemented an Online Application.
- In the fall, the University of Massachusetts Lowell established its first satellite location on the Haverhill campus.
- The NECC Knights basketball team reached the NJCAA Division III World Series and finished among the top ten teams in the nation.

### 2014

- The 44,000 square foot Dr. Ibrahim El-Hefni Allied Health Technology Center opened in Lawrence. The Building featured a Health Education Simulation Center, computer labs, classrooms, and a Career Planning and Advising Center (CPAC).
- The college dedicated the privately funded Marjorie E. Goudreault Parking Area and Landscaped Walkway connecting the El Hefni Center with the Fournier Education Center.
- A \$1.2 million grant was awarded to a partnership between NECC and the Greater Lawrence Technical High School (GLTS) to support equipment and creation of an Advanced Manufacturing Academy.
- The college received a Platinum Endorsement Award for its Labo-

ratory Sciences Degree Program, the highest endorsement given by the Massachusetts Life Sciences Education Consortium.

- The president appointed an Executive Director of Lawrence Campus and Community Relations (later a vice-president) given the growth of the Lawrence campus in the city and the community responsibilities inherent in that growth.
- The library added an Information Literacy Lab in Lawrence which includes an electronic classroom dedicated to library instruction and media spaces for students.
- The college established a Veterans' Center on the Haverhill Campus and added a satellite office in Lawrence.
- Representatives from enrollment management, academic services, student services, marketing communications, and institutional research developed a three year Recruitment Plan.
- A Compliance Committee was formed to monitor and advise the president with respect to college compliance issues and related activities.
- In a collaborative effort between student journalists and the college's marketing staff, a website was created for the award-winning student newspaper, *The Observer*.
- The college began offering a new program, Movement Science, which was created following a program review of the General Studies: Physical Education, Exercise Science, and Sports Studies Program.
- Francisco Urena, a 2009 NECC alumnus, was appointed by Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker as the new Secretary of Veterans' Services.
- 45 police officers (a quarter of whom were veterans) graduated in the first class of the NECC/Methuen Police Academy, an intensive 21-week training program located on the Haverhill Campus. The Academy is managed by Northern Essex and the Methuen police Department with guidance from a local advisory board of local police chiefs. (As of 2017, the Academy has trained over 170 law enforcement officers for police departments across the Merrimack Valley.)
- Under the direction of the Center for Corporate and Community Education, the number of NECC Life Long Learning programs was reduced and those more academically focused were combined with the expanding College of Older Learners (CoOL) programs that are senior driven and facilitated.
- The college implemented NECCLink, a career services website that helps students and employers connect with each other.

## 2015

- The college successfully submitted a Five Year Interim Report to the NEASC. Special emphasis was on two topics: 1) Transitioning to a new president while maintaining strong governance, planning, and advancement capabilities; and 2) Ensuring sufficient numbers of faculty to serve increased student enrollment.

- As part of the college's strategic planning process during 2013 and 2014, the college community developed a new mission statement which was approved by the full Board of the Department of Higher Education in March of 2015.
- The Learning Accommodations Center at NECC was awarded a Massachusetts Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment Initiative (MAICEI) grant, funded by the Commonwealth since 2007, which provides dual enrollment opportunities for students, ages 18-22, with intellectual disabilities and/or autism spectrum disorder, to participate in an inclusive college experience.
- The college updated its Core Values by removing "diversity" and adding "culture of inclusion."
- Through careful selection, orientation, and ongoing support, the numbers of students enrolled in Early College and Dual Enrollment programs established with 15 local secondary schools increased from under 150 in 2012-2013 to nearly 800 in 2014-2015.
- Faculty leadership led to integration of global learning objectives into all disciplines and an increase in the number of international short courses offered at the college. Participation in study abroad programs has increased. Through the college's membership in the College Consortium for International Studies (CCIS)), students have access to over 50 programs in more than 30 countries. In 2014, two new transfer agreements were signed with foreign institutions.
- A new General Studies: Individualized Option Degree was developed providing students an opportunity to build and customize their own degrees based on specific career goals and interests.
- NECC was invited to participate as an Experimental Site for financial aid by the United States Department of Education.
- The NECC Trustees accepted a gift of the Louise Haffner Fournier Education Center from the EMLO Realty Trust (under the direction of the Fournier Family). The facility had been part of the Lawrence Campus since 1999 under a license agreement.
- The NECC Faculty Association voted "work to rule."

## 2016

- As part of the second \$20 million United States Department of Labor Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training Program grant awarded to the Massachusetts Community Colleges Executive Office, NECC has taken the lead statewide in providing training and assistance to its sister community college faculty in OER: Open Educational Resources. The purpose of the overall grant is to develop and improve programs that use evidence-based or innovative strategies to prepare students for successful careers in growing and emerging industries.
- Northern Essex entered a strategic partnership, The Massachusetts Advanced Manufacturing Tech Hire Consortium, with Mount Wachusett (lead college) and North Shore Community Colleges, several regional Workforce Investment Boards, and the Northeast Advanced Manufacturing Consortium. The purpose of the Consor-

tium is to provide training, work-based experiences, support services, and job placement assistance to youth and other unemployed, underemployed, dislocated, and incumbent worker populations. A primary purpose of the Consortium was to develop a proposal to be submitted to the US Department of Labor (The Department of Labor/Mount Wachusett Community College: Massachusetts Advanced Manufacturing Tech Hire Consortium Grant). The proposal was funded in 2017 for a four year period in the amount of approximately \$4 million of which Northern Essex will receive over \$500,000.

- NECC now has hundreds of articulation agreements with close to two dozen private institutions, eight Massachusetts universities (under the MassTransfer Program), and three international schools. Most recently the college established new agreements to bring bachelor degree completion programs to NECC campuses with Regis College (Massachusetts) and Lyndon State College (Vermont). In May of 2014, the first class graduated with their bachelor degrees in American Sign Language - English Interpreting from Framingham State University's program on the Haverhill Campus.
- With support from an NECC Fund Grant, the Criminal Justice and Lab Sciences Programs hosted a Crime Scene Open House giving attendees (prospective students) the opportunity to use scientific techniques to solve a staged crime.
- The Women of NECC celebrated their 20th Annual Open House Gala raising thousands of dollars for scholarships.
- The Knights baseball team returned from the NJCAA Division 3 World Series as the number two team in the nation.
- The Military Times added NECC to its "Best for Vets: Colleges 2016" rankings. NECC was one of just 25 two-year colleges to receive this honor.
- The college announced a new program, PIÉS Latinos de NECC (International Programs of Higher Education for Latinos at NECC), designed to increase higher education attainment among Latino immigrants living in Greater Lawrence.
- The college community developed a new strategic plan titled NECC 2020 approved by the Board of Trustees in December.

## 2017

- Renovation of the Spurk Building on the Haverhill Campus was completed with \$7 million in state funds. The funds were used to update classrooms, modernize bathrooms, address air quality issues, modernize the elevator, replace outdated furniture and equipment, and improve student meeting spaces outside of Lecture Hall A, the Top Notch Theater, and Jitters Café.
- Renovations on the John R. Dimitry Building in Lawrence are scheduled to begin in December.
- The college received a grant from the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education: STEM Starter Academy designed to support the needs of students interested in pursuing STEM (Science, Technolo-

gy, Engineering, Mathematics) pathway programs of study, particularly underprepared students. Funded at approximately \$1.25 million over four years, with its 2017 award, NECC will offer a variety of STEM related programming for students, a STEM Speaker Series, Book Club, and a Lending Library in addition to a STEM Retention Scholarship.

- For the 36th consecutive year and the second of a five-year award in the total amount of approximately \$1.8 million, NECC accepted a grant award from the US Department of Education for the Student Support Services program titled PACE (Pathways to Academic and Career Excellence). This year's grant augments institutional efforts to help disadvantaged students succeed academically, graduate, and transfer to four-year colleges and universities.
- The college accepted a grant award of \$495,000 from the Massachusetts Workforce Skills Cabinet for the Massachusetts Skills Capital Grant Program titled Culinary Arts and Mechatronics. The grant will provide equipment support for both a new Culinary Arts program that will be located in the city of Haverhill and the development of a new advanced manufacturing program in Mechatronics that will be housed at the Greater Lawrence Technical School.
- NECC accepted the third year of funding from a grant totaling \$225,000 from EDUCAUSE-iPASS: Integrated Planning and Advising for Student Success in Higher Education. EDUCAUSE, a nonprofit association that works to advance higher education through the use of information technology. Supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, grant funding has been open only to Achieving the Dream Leader Colleges. The overarching goal of iPASS is to help students remain engaged in their studies, increase their learning, and ultimately graduate. This award will support the college's effort to bring about an integrated system that improves student performance.
- The Center for Corporate and Community Education started a contextualized Accounting Program that combines English language learning with basic accounting skills in response to the needs of Lawrence's growing immigrant population
- During the 2016-2017 academic year, NECC engaged in a program audit process for each of the college's associate degree and certificate programs. The process consisted of three components: (1) Consultants (Gray Associates) led an analysis of student demand, employment opportunities, and competition; (2) the college conducted a financial analysis of cost and revenue, and (3) faculty leaders provided an input analysis addressing factors such as program alignment with accreditation requirements and value to the college and external community. The results were shared with faculty and staff and, based on feedback, recommendations were made to the Cabinet regarding faculty staffing for programs identified as having significant potential for growth (Business; Hospitality and Culinary; Computer Information Science, and; Liberal Arts: Psychology); inactivating six certificate and two associate degree programs; increasing class size maximums for distance education classes consistent

with contractual agreements; and ending support for Supplemental Instruction from the Tutoring Center. Implementation of these actions is in progress.

- Through a competitive bid process, Northern Essex was selected by the Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board to assume management and operational responsibilities for the ValleyWorks One-Stop Career Center, one of sixteen such regional employment centers across the Commonwealth. Currently funded by a two million dollar a year grant from the United States Department of Labor, the center has locations in Haverhill and Lawrence and serves over 10,000 job seekers and 700 employers a year.
- In the face of shrinking state support, climbing costs, and declining enrollments, the college made significant budget reductions, eliminated or reorganized programs, and laid off 20 employees.
- NECC is expanding collaboration with Instituto Tecnológico Superior de San Luis (the only community college in the Dominican Republic (DR) aligning curricula to facilitate transfer of students from the DR to NECC. The college also has developed a multifaceted collaboration with Universidad Autónoma de Santo Domingo to support faculty professional development, student exchange opportunities, and completion of degrees from UASD at NECC.
- The Center for Corporate and Community Education moved from Riverwalk to the HOW (Opportunity Works Building) in Haverhill.
- NECC has begun restructuring its athletics program in an effort to involve more students, expand offerings in Lawrence, and attract new resources to meet facility needs. NECC athletes and teams have met with great success. For example, the women's basketball team has won two state and one regional championship and qualified once for the NJCAA Final Four. In 2016, the men's baseball team captured its fourth state championship in five years.

*This list of Selected Highlights was compiled by Dean Emerita Mary Wilson-Tauson in collaboration with Dean of Development Wendy Shaffer, Director of Libraries Michael Hearn, Executive Director of the Center for Corporate and Community Education George Moriarty, and Ernestine Greenslade, the Director of Public Relations. It drew on material in Self-Study Reports completed between 1990 and 2015, Annual Reports for the years 1995-2016, other college Reports and documents, as well as written and anecdotal information provided by Tina Favara, Donna Bertolino, Judith Zubrow, Joyce Brody, Michael Swiniarski, Cheryl Goodwin, Susan McAvoy, Linda Giampa, Diane Zold-Gross and others. The Highlights are weighted toward more recent years based solely on the relative availability of material. Every effort has been made to have the content accurate but some developments crossed fiscal years and all reflect a development at a specific time which may have evolved further in subsequent years.*





